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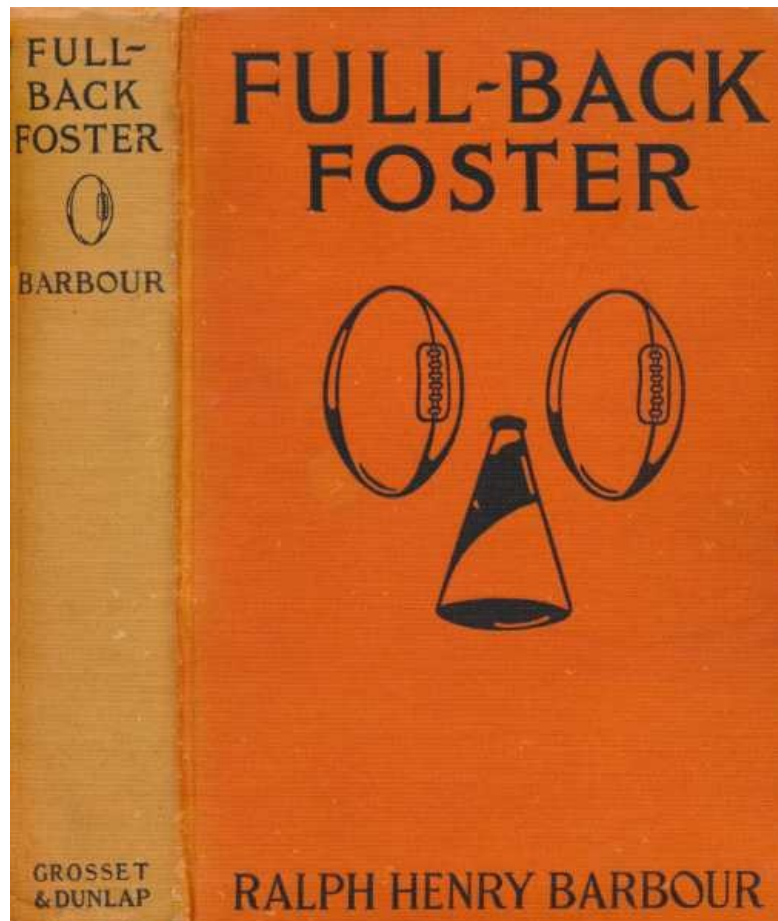
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FULL-BACK FOSTER



He felt that he was being discussed

FULL-BACK FOSTER

BY

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

AUTHOR OF

LEFT END EDWARDS,
LEFT GUARD GILBERT, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

E. C. CASWELL



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FULL-BACK FOSTER

[1]

CHAPTER I MYRON ARRIVES

His name was Myron Warrenton Foster, and he came from Port Foster, Delaware. In age he was seventeen, but he looked more. He was large for his years, but, since he was well proportioned, the fact was not immediately apparent. What did strike you at once were good looks, good health and an air of well-being. The pleasing impression made by the boy's features was, however, somewhat marred by an expression of self-satisfaction, and it may be that the straight, well-knit figure carried itself with an air of surety that was almost complacent. So, at least, thought one who witnessed Myron's descent from the New York train that September afternoon.

"There's a promising-looking chap," said Jud Mellen, "but he somehow gives you the

impression that he's bought Warne and has come down to look the town over."

Harry Cater laughed as he picked his trunk check from a handful of coins. "Lots of 'em look that way when they first arrive, Jud. I'm not sure you didn't yourself," he added slyly. [2]

"If I did, I soon got over it." The football captain smiled drily, his gaze following the subject of their remarks. "Just as I suspected," he continued. "It's a taxi for his. Four blocks is too far for the poor frail lad."

"Oh, come, Jud, be fair. Maybe he doesn't know whether the school's four blocks or forty. Besides, he's much too beautifully got up to tramp it. He might get dust on that corking suit of his."

"It is rather a good-looking outfit, and that's a fact. Maybe if I was dolled up like that I'd want to ride, too. Well, come on, Katie, and let's get up there. Practice is at three, and you've got only about forty minutes to find yourself in."

Harry Cater, or "Katie," as he was known at Parkinson School, had been more charitable than correct in assuming that the new boy was uncertain of the distance between station and school, for the catalogue had definitely said four blocks. But had the distance been two short blocks instead of four long ones it is unlikely that Myron Foster would have walked. Not that he had anything against walking; he recognised it as a healthful and beneficial form of exercise, as well as a pleasant occupation under some circumstances; but he was used to patronising automobiles when it was necessary to get from one place to another. At home there were two cars usually at his service, and when he was away from home a taxi-cab served as well. He couldn't remember when walking had been a necessity, for prior to the autos there had been carriages, and before the carriages—which had included a pony-cart for his especial use—there had been an English perambulator with easy springs and shining varnished leather top; and beyond that his memory didn't go. [3]

The vehicle that Myron found himself in brought a smile of amused disdain to his face. It was cheap and small and none too clean, and it made more noise as it whisked over the cobbles than a boiler works. However, when it crossed Adams Street and reached the asphalt it quieted down considerably and its occupant was able to obtain a rather more distinct impression of the little town that was to have the honour of being his place of residence for the ensuing nine months. He rather liked what he could see of it, especially when, having bumped across the trolley tracks on Main Street, he found himself in what was evidently the residential part of Warne. The shops had given way to neat, sometimes rather showy, dwellings on his right, set behind picket fences or lilac hedges, the latter looking sere and frowsy after a hot summer. On his left was a quaint, century-old burying ground in which mossy slate slabs leaned precariously under the cool, deep shadows of giant elms and maples. The church beyond, with its unlovely square steeple, peered through the trees in friendly fashion at the newcomer. At the next intersection the boy caught a glimpse of the inscription "Washington Ave." on a signboard, and in the next moment had his first view of the school. To his left the campus stretched for two long blocks, a level oblong of green turf intersected by gravel paths and shaded by linden trees. Beyond the campus the school buildings ran in a straight line, or, to be exact, five of them did; there were several others out of position, so to speak, among them that to which he was being whisked. From Maple Street the taxi bounded on two wheels around a corner into a gravelled avenue, past the little brick Administration Building, turned again by the gymnasium and a moment later brought up with a squeaking of brakes in front of Sohmer Hall. [4]

Sohmer was the most recent addition to the dormitories, and the most luxurious. Although it followed the architectural style of the others and, at first glance, looked quite as old and quite as New England, it nevertheless possessed modifications that stood for a convenience and comfort that the other dormitories lacked. The driver of the taxi, a sandy-haired, gum-chewing young man with the cheap air of a village "sport," looked disdain as Myron pointed to the brown leather kit-bag and remarked carelessly: "You might just fetch that along." [5]

"Sure!" jeered the driver, pushing back a battered straw imitation of a Panama hat from his heated brow and grinning widely. "And maybe you'd like me to unpack it for you, kid, and hang up your things? I ain't got nothing else to do, and a quarter's a lot of money, and—"

"I haven't asked you what I owed yet, have I?" said Myron. "If carrying that bag is worth another quarter why not carry it and get the money? I dare say I can scrape up a half somehow!"

"Oh, whyn't you say so?" muttered the other. "How'd I know you was John D. Vanderbilt? Where's it going?"

"Number 17, wherever that is. Second floor, I think."

"Most of you guys," continued the driver affably as he led the way up the slate stairway, "expects us to lug trunks and everything and don't want to slip us anything extra. Nothing doing! I'm willing to be obliging, see, but I ain't in business for my health, mister. Here you are, sir. Number 17, you said? Door's unlocked. Gee, some room, ain't it? What about your trunk, sir? Want me to fetch it for you?" [6]

"No, it's coming by express. That's all, thanks. Here you are. There's a quarter for the ride, a quarter for the bag and a quarter for a tip. All right?"

"Sure! You're a real gentleman, mister. Say, any time you want a taxi or—or anything, see, you send for me. Name's Eddie Moses. Telephone to Benton's cigar store and they'll give me the call."

"All right, Eddie. All doors open out."

"That so? Oh, all right. You can be sassy with me any time you like for a quarter!" And Mr. Eddie Moses, chuckling at his wit, took himself away, leaving Myron at leisure to look around his quarters.

Number 17 Sohmer consisted of two rooms, a good-sized square study and a sleeping room off it. The study windows—there were two of them—overlooked the campus, although this afternoon, since the lindens still held their leaves, the view was restricted to so much of the campus as lay between the hall and the path that stretched from the gymnasium to the main gate on Washington Avenue. The bedroom also had a window with a similar outlook. This apartment was only large enough to hold the two single beds, the two chiffoniers and the two straight-backed chairs constituting its furnishing, and Myron soon turned back from the doorway and removed his gaze to the study again. There were, he decided, possibilities in the study. Of course he would get rid of the present junk, but it must serve until his furniture came from home, which ought to be in another three or four days. It had been his mother's idea to ship the things from his grey and yellow room at Warrenton Hall. She thought Myron would be less homesick if surrounded by the familiar objects of home. Myron's own idea had been to purchase a new outfit in Philadelphia, but when he had seen how set his mother had been on her plan he had not insisted. The only thing that troubled him now was that, recalling the number and generous proportions of the articles on the way, he feared the study would be far too small to hold them! Why, his couch alone would take up almost all of the end of the room where the windows were! Well, he would just have to use what he could and store the other things somewhere: or send them home again.

He had tossed his hat on the stained table that occupied the centre of the study—in shape that hat was not unlike the one worn by Eddie Moses, but all similarity ended right there—and now he removed his jacket of steel-grey, serge-like material, rolled up the sleeves of a pale yellow silk shirt and passed into the bedroom to wash. It may be well to state in passing that Myron affected grey and yellow, both in his room furnishings and in his attire. It was a conceit of Mrs. Foster's. She was fond of colour combinations and, could she have had her way, would have prescribed for every member of her household. But Myron was the only one who consented to be guided by her taste. He didn't care a rap whether his wallpaper was grey with yellow stripes or purple with pink daisies, only, having been told that grey-and-yellow suited him wonderfully he accepted it as a fact, said that it "looked all right, he supposed," and was soon a willing slave to the grey-and-yellow habit. Mrs. Foster's attempt to persuade her husband to pin his taste to brown-and-lilac, however, was a wretched failure. Mr. Foster snorted disgustedly and went right on buying green and magenta neckties and socks that made his wife shudder.

Having washed his hands and face and dried them on a handkerchief—a soft, pure-linen affair with a monogram worked in one corner in grey and yellow—Myron opened his kit-bag and unpacked, stowing the things neatly and systematically in one of the chiffoniers. He would, he reflected, get them to take the other chiffonier and the other bed out. As he was to occupy Number 17 alone there was no need of them. When the bag was unpacked and set in a corner of the closet he donned his jacket again and strolled to a window. The campus was livening up. Although the foliage hid the other buildings very effectually he could hear the patter of feet on gravel and steps, voices in shouts or laughter and, from somewhere, the tuning of a banjo. As he looked down, leaning from the sill, two lads came across the grass and paused a little further along under a window. They were in flannels, and one carried a racket. They tilted their heads and hailed:

"O Jimmy! Jimmy Lynde! He-e-ey, Jimmy! Jimmy-y-y!"

After a moment a voice answered from a neighbouring window: "Hello, Gus, you old rascal! 'Lo, Petey! How's everything?"

"Lovely. Come and have a game. Channing's over there, and he and Pete'll play you and me. Huh? Oh, forget it! There's oodles of time for that. All right, hustle along. We'll go on over. Get a move on!"

The two waved and turned toward the gymnasium. Myron felt a trifle lonesome when they had gone, for it came to him that he was a stranger in a strange land. He wondered how long it would be before fellows stopped under his window and called to him. It probably didn't take long to get acquainted, he decided, but still he sort of wished he knew at least one of his school-fellows as a starter. Perhaps, after all, it would have been nicer to have had a room-mate. Personally, he hadn't cared much one way or the other, but his mother had exclaimed in horror at the idea of his sharing his room with a strange boy. "Why, you can't tell what sort of a person he might be, Myron dear," she had protested. "Of course we know that Parkinson is one of the nicest schools and that some of the very best people send their sons there, but nowadays it's quite impossible to keep the wrong sort out of anywhere. It would be awful if you found yourself with some dreadful low kind of boy." So Myron had said, "Oh, all right, Mater," and dismissed the notion. And maybe she was right, too, for it would be a frightful bore to have to live in such close quarters with some "roughneck." On the whole he guessed he was better off alone, even if he did feel rather lonely for a few days.

He recalled the fact that he hadn't yet registered at the Office, or wherever you did register, but he had until six to do that, and a glance at a handsome thin-case gold watch showed that the time was still short of three. But it was dull up here, and stuffy, too, and he guessed he'd go down and look the place over. As he turned from his window he became aware of the fact that the dormitory was no longer quiet. Doors opened and closed, feet shuffled on the stairs and there were sounds of talking and singing and whistling. It certainly sounded more cheerful, he thought.

The taxi driver had closed the door behind him, and now Myron started across the study to open it. Maybe if it was open some one might see him and drop in. He put his hat back on the table, deciding not to go out just yet. As he reached his hand toward the doorknob there were sounds of heavy footsteps outside. Then something thumped against the door, a voice muttered—

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Myron pulled the portal open. Framed in the doorway stood a veritable giant of a boy, a battered valise in each hand, a ragged-edged stiff straw hat tilted far back from his perspiring countenance and a none too clean handkerchief dangling from inside a wilted collar.

"Atta boy!" said the stranger genially, and then, to Myron's amazement, he piled into the study, fairly sweeping the other aside, dropped his bags with mighty thuds on the floor and mopped his broad face with the dangling handkerchief. "Geewhillikins, but that's some tote, kiddo!" he observed with an all-encompassing grin. "I'm sweating like a horse!"

"It is warm," replied Myron in a voice that was quite otherwise. "But haven't you—er—made a mistake?"

"Watyer mean, mistake?" asked the other, puzzled.

"In the room. This is seventeen."

"Sure! That's all right. I just came from the Office. That Hoyt guy said seventeen. And, say, kiddo, it's some swell dive, ain't it? Guess you and I are lucky guys, all right, to get it, eh?"

CHAPTER II

SO DOES JOE DOBBINS

[13]

Myron didn't know who "that Hoyt guy" might be, but he was sure that he or some one else had made a horrible mistake. Why, this big, good-natured, badly-dressed boy was the roughest sort of a "roughneck," the identical type, doubtless, that his mother had spoken of so distastefully! Myron viewed him during a moment of silence, at a loss for words. The newcomer had removed his tattered hat and was now struggling with a jacket that, far too tight in the sleeves, parted reluctantly from the moist garments beneath. But it came off finally and the boy tossed it carelessly to a chair and stretched a pair of long arms luxuriously ere he sank onto it. "That train was like a furnace all the way, and the ice-water gave out at Hartford," he said. "Well, here we are, though. What's your name? Mine's Dobbins; Joe Dobbins, only they generally call me 'Whoa.'"

"My name is Foster," replied Myron rather weakly.

"Foster, eh? That's all right. I know a fellow at home name of Foster. Drives for Gandell and Frye. They're the big dry-goods folks. He's an all-right guy, too, Sam is. He and I used to be pretty thick before I came away. Were you here last year, Foster?"

[14]

"No, I—this is my first year."

"What class?"

"Third, I expect."

"Same here. I'm new, too. I was at St. Michael's last year, until April. I beat it then. Got in wrong with faculty, you know." He smiled and winked. "Great little school, St. Michael's, but sort of narrow. My old man said he guessed I needed more elbow-room. So I thought I'd try this place. Looks all right so far; sort of pretty: plenty of trees. I like trees. Grew up with 'em. Maybe that's why. Dad made his money out of trees."

"Indeed?" responded Myron, coldly polite. "Lumber, I suppose."

"Wrong, kiddo. Spruce gum."

"Oh!"

"Maybe you've heard of him: Tom Dobbins: the Spruce Gum King, some call him."

Myron shook his head. For some absurd reason he felt slightly apologetic, and was angry with himself for it.

[15]

"No? Well, I guess you don't come from my part of the country. Portland, Maine's my home. We've been living there six or seven years. I missed the woods at first a heap, let me tell you. Why, we used to live right in 'em: big trees all around: no town nearer than six miles. I was born there, in a log house. So were my three sisters. Them was the happy days, as the guy says."

"Very—very interesting, I'm sure," said Myron, "but about this room, Dobbins: You're quite certain that they told you Number 17?"

"Sure! Why not? What's wrong with it?" Dobbins gazed questioningly about the study and then leaned forward to peer through the open door of the bedroom. "Looks all right. Plumbing out o' order, or something? Any one had smallpox here? What's the idea?"

"The idea," replied Myron a bit haughtily, "is that I am supposed to have this suite to myself. I particularly asked for a single suite. In fact, I am paying for one. So I presume that either you or I have made a mistake."

Dobbins whistled. Then he laughed enjoyably. Myron thought it was a particularly unpleasant laugh. "Say, that's rich, ain't it?" asked Dobbins finally. "No wonder you were sort of stand-offish, kiddo! Gee, it's a wonder you didn't biff me a couple and throw me out on my bean! I'll say it is! Butting in on your—er—privacy, like, eh? Say, I'm sure that Hoyt guy said seventeen, but he may have got his wires crossed. I'll mosey over and—"

[16]

"Don't bother. I haven't registered yet. I'll straighten it out. Maybe he meant one of the other halls."

"Might be," said Dobbins doubtfully, "but he sure said Sohmer. This *is* Sohmer, ain't it?"

"Yes. Well, I'll find out about it. Meanwhile you might just—er—wait."

"Got you, kiddo. I'll come along, though, if you say so. I don't mind. I'm fine and cool now. Maybe I'd better, eh?"

"No, no," replied Myron quickly. "You stay here." He repressed a shudder at the thought of being seen walking into the Administration Building with Dobbins! For fear that the latter would insist on accompanying him, he seized his hat and fairly bolted, leaving the intruder in possession of the disputed premises.

The Administration Building was but a few rods away, and Myron, nursing his indignation, was soon there. But it was evident that he would have to wait a considerable time, for the space outside the railing that divided the secretary's office in half was well filled with returning students. There was nothing for Myron to do save take his place in the line that wound from the secretary's desk across the room and back again. But the official, in spite of a nervous manner, handled the registrations efficiently, and after fifteen minutes or so, during which he was annoyedly aware of the amused stares and whisperings of a couple of fourth class youngsters, Myron's turn came. He gave his name and answered the questions and then, when the secretary waved him on, "There's been a mistake made about my room, sir," he said. "I engaged a single suite nearly two months ago and you wrote that I was to have Number 17 Sohmer. Now I find that you've put another fellow in with me, a fellow named Dobbin or Dobbins."

[17]

The secretary rescued the card that he had a moment before consigned to the index at his elbow and glanced quickly over it. "Oh, yes," he answered. "I recall it now. But I wrote to your father several days ago explaining that owing to the unexpectedly large number of students this year we'd be unable to give you a study to yourself. Possibly you left before the letter reached your home in—ah, yes,—Port Foster, Delaware. The school catalogue states distinctly that rooms are rented singly only when circumstances permit. The suite assigned you is a double one and we have had to fill it. Very sorry, Mr. Foster, but perhaps you will find it an advantage to have a companion with you."

[18]

"But my father is paying for a single room—"

"That has been arranged. One-half of the first term rental has been refunded. That is all, Mr. Foster?"

"Why—why, I suppose so, but I don't like it, sir. You agreed to give me a room to myself. If I had known how it was to be, I—I think I'd have gone somewhere else!"

"Well, we'd be sorry to lose you, of course," replied the secretary politely, "but unfortunately there is no way of giving you the accommodations you want. If you care to communicate with your father by wire we will hold your registration open until the morning. Now I shall have to ask you to let the next young gentleman—"

"I guess you'd better do that," replied Myron haughtily. "I'll telegraph my father right away."

The secretary nodded, already busy with the next youth, and Myron made his way out. As he went down the worn stone steps he saw the two fourth class boys adorning the top rail of the fence that bordered Maple Street, and as he passed them he heard a snicker and a voice asking "Isn't he a *dur-ream*?" His first angry impulse was to turn back and scold, but second thoughts sent him on with an expression of contemptuous indifference. But the incident did not sweeten his disposition any, and when he strode into Number 17 again it needed only the sight that met him to set him off. Joe Dobbins, minus coat and vest, his suspenders hanging, was sitting in the room's one easy chair with his stockinged feet on the table. Myron, closing the door behind him, glared for an instant. Then:

[19]

"What do you think this is, Dobbin?" he demanded angrily. "A—a stable?"

Dobbins' jaw dropped and he viewed Myron with ludicrous surprise. "How do you mean, a stable?" he asked.

"I mean that if you're going to stay here with me tonight you've got to act like a—a gentleman! Sitting around with your suspenders down and your shoes off and your feet on the table—"

"Oh!" said Joe, in vast relief. "That's it! I thought maybe you were going to crack some joke about me being a horse, on account of my name. Don't gentlemen put their feet on the table and let their galluses down?"

[20]

"No, they don't!" snapped Myron. "And as long as you're rooming with me—which I hope won't be long—I'll ask you to cut out that 'roughneck' stuff."

"Sure," grinned Joe. "Anything to oblige, Foster." He had already dropped his feet, and now he drew his suspenders over his shoulders again and slipped his feet back into his shoes. "Don't guess I'll ever get on to the ways of the best circles, Foster. I'm what you call an Unspoiled Child

of Nature. Well, what did the guy in the Office say? I'm betting I was right, kiddo."

"And don't call me 'kiddo'! You know my name. Use it."

"Gosh-all-hemlock!" murmured the other. "Say, you must have one of those fiery Southern temperaments I've read about. Now I know how the Civil War happened. I'll bet you're a direct descendant of General Lee!"

"I'm not a Southerner," answered Myron. "Just where do you think Delaware is?"

"Well, I didn't know you hailed from there," replied Joe untroubledly, "but I'd say Delaware was sort of Southern. Ain't it?"

"No more than Maine. Look here, Dobbin——"

"Dobbins, please; with an S."

"Dobbins, then," continued Myron impatiently. "That fellow over there says the school's so full I can't have a room to myself. They promised me I could two months ago, and we've paid for one. Well, I'm going to get out and go somewhere where—where they know how to treat you. But—but I can't leave until tomorrow, so we'll have to share this place tonight."

"That'll be all right," replied Joe affably. "I don't mind."

Myron stared. "I didn't suppose *you* did," he said.

"Meaning *you* do, eh?" Joe laughed good-naturedly. "That it?"

"I'm not used to sharing my room with others," answered Myron stiffly. "And I'm afraid you and I haven't very much in common. So I guess we'll get on better if—if we keep to ourselves."

"All right, kiddo—I mean Foster. Anything for a quiet life! Suppose we draw a line down the middle of the room, eh? Got a piece of chalk or something?"

"I've taken the chiffonier nearest the window," said Myron, disregarding the levity. "But I'll have my things out in the morning, in case you prefer it to the other."

"Chiff—Oh, you mean the skinny bureau? Doesn't make any difference to me which I have, ki—Foster. Say, you don't really mean that you're going to leave Parkinson just because you can't have a room to yourself, do you?"

"I do. I'm going out now to send a wire to my father."

"Gee, I wouldn't do that, honest! Why, say, maybe I can find a room somewhere else. I don't mind. This place is too elegant for me, anyway. Better let me have a talk with that guy over there before you do anything rash, Foster. I'm sorry I upset your arrangements like this, but it isn't really my fault; now is it?"

"I suppose not," replied Myron grudgingly. "But I don't believe you can do anything with him. Still, if you don't mind trying, I'll put off sending that telegram until you get back."

"Atta boy! Where's my coat? Just you sit tight till I tell that guy where he gets off. Be right back, kiddo!"

Joe Dobbins banged the door behind him and stamped away down the corridor. Pending his return, Myron found a piece of paper, drew his silver pencil from his pocket and frowningly set about the composition of that telegram. Possibly, he thought, it would be better to address it to his mother. Of the two, she was more likely to recognise the enormity of the offence committed by the school. Still, she would see it in any case if he addressed it to the house and not to the office. When it was done, after several erasures, it read:

"Mr. John W. Foster, Warrenton Hall, Port Foster, Del.

"Arrived safely, but find that I cannot have room to myself as was agreed. Must share suite with impossible fellow named Dobbins. Prefer some other school. Not too late if you wire tonight. Love. MYRON."

Putting Dobbins' name into the message was, he considered, quite a masterly stroke. He imagined his mother's expression when she read it!

CHAPTER III

THE "IMPOSSIBLE FELLOW"

Dobbins was gone the better part of half an hour and when he finally returned his expression showed that he had met with failure. "Still," he explained hopefully, "Hoyt says he will give me the first vacancy that turns up. Sometimes fellows have to drop out after school begins, he says. Fail at exams or something. He says maybe he can put me somewhere else within a week. Mind you, he doesn't promise, but I made a pretty good yarn of it, and I guess he will do it if he possibly can." Joe Dobbins chuckled reminiscently. "I told him that if he didn't separate us I wouldn't answer for what happened. Said we'd already had two fights and were spoiling for another. Said you'd pitched my things out the window and that I'd torn up all your yellow neckties. Maybe he didn't believe all I told him: he's a foxy little guy; but I guess I got him thinkin', all right!"

"You needn't have told him all that nonsense," demurred Myron. "He will think I'm a—a—"

"Not for a minute! I told him you were a perfect gentleman. Incompatibility of temperament is what I called it. He said why didn't I leave off the last two syllables. Well, that's that, kiddo—I mean Foster. Better leave it lay until we see what happens, eh?" [25]

"Not at all. I shall send this telegram, Dobbins. I don't believe he has any idea of—of doing anything about it."

"We-ell, you're the doctor, but—Say, where'll you go if you leave this place?"

"I don't know yet. There are plenty of other schools around here, though. There's one up the line a ways. I think it's called Kenwood. Or there's—"

"Kenwood? Gee, boy, you don't want to go there! Don't you read the crime column in the papers? Why, Kenwood is filled with thugs and hoboes and the scum of the earth. A feller on the train told me so coming down here. Parkinson and Kenwood are rivals: get it? You don't want to throw down this place and take up with the enemy, eh?"

"I don't see what that has to do with it," Myron objected. "I'm not a Parkinson fellow. And I dare say that Kenwood is quite as good a school as Parkinson."

But Joe Dobbins shook his head. "That feller on the train talked mighty straight. I wouldn't like to think he was lying to me. He said that Kenwood was—was—now what was it he said? Oh, I got it! He said it was an 'asylum for the mentally deficient.' Sounds bad, eh?" [26]

"Rot!" grunted Myron. "I'm going over to the telegraph office."

"All right. If the Big Boss drops in I'll tell him."

When Myron had gone Joe promptly removed coat and vest once more, dropped his suspenders about his hips and kicked off his shoes. "Might as well be comfortable when His Majesty's away," he sighed. "Gee, but he's the limit, now ain't he? I suppose I ought to have spanked him when he called me a stable—or whatever it was. But I dunno, he's sort of a classy guy. Guess he isn't so worse if you hack into him. Bark's a little punk, but the wood's all right underneath, likely. Don't know if I could stand living with him regular, though. Not much fun in life if you can't slip your shoes off when your feet hurt. Well, I guess I'll get these satchels emptied. What was it he called those bureaus, now? Chiff—chiff—I'll have to get him to tell me that again. One thing, Joey: living with Mr. Foster'll teach you manners. Only I'd hate to think I'd ever get to wearing a lemon-yellow necktie!" [27]

Still feeling deeply wronged and out-of-sorts, Myron made his way back to Maple Street and set out toward the business part of Warne. The breeze that had made the late September afternoon fairly comfortable had died away and the maples that lined the broad, pleasant thoroughfare drooped their leaves listlessly and the asphalt radiated heat. Myron wished that he had shed his waistcoat in the room. Students were still arriving, for he passed a number on their way to the school, bags in hands, and several taxis and tumble-down carriages went by with hilarious occupants oozing forth from doors and windows. One of the taxi drivers honked brazenly as his clattering vehicle passed Myron and the latter glanced up in time to receive a flatteringly friendly wave and shout from Eddie Moses. Myron frowned. "Folks here are a lot of savages," he muttered.

The telegram despatched, he made his way to a nearby drug store, seated himself on a stool and asked for a "peach-and-cream." The freckle-faced, lanky youth behind the counter shook his head sadly. "Ain't got no peach today. I can give you vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, rasp—"

"I didn't mean syrup. Haven't you any fruit? I want a peach-and-cream." [28]

"Don't know what that is. Anyway, we ain't got it. How about a chocolate sundae with puffed rice? Lots of the fellers call for them."

"No, thanks." Myron descended from the stool and went out, more than ever assured of the undesirability of Parkinson School as a place of sojourn. Think of a town where you couldn't get a peach-and-cream! Why, even the smallest shops in Port Foster knew what a peach-and-cream was! He cast contemptuous looks upon the modest stores and places of business along Adams Street, and even the new Burton Block over on the corner of School Street, six stories high and glittering with broad glass windows, only drew a word of derision. "Suppose they call that thing a skyscraper," he muttered. "Huh! Puffed rice!"

Returning, he went through School Street to Washington Avenue. The south side of that shady thoroughfare, called Faculty Row, presented a pleasing vista, in each direction, of neat lawns and venerable elms and glowing beds of flowers. Here and there a sprinkler tossed its spray into the sunlight. Myron had to acknowledge, albeit grudgingly, that Port Foster had nothing prettier to offer. Facing him, across the Avenue, since School Street ended there, was the main gate to the campus, and straight ahead a shady tunnel roofed with closely-set linden trees led the eyes to the gleaming façade of Parkinson Hall, which, unlike the other school buildings, was of light-hued sandstone and was surmounted by an imposing dome. From the gate in front of him two other similar paths led diagonally away, and choosing the right-hand one Myron found grateful relief from the sun. He removed his hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with an immaculate handkerchief, and when he had finished returned the handkerchief to his breast pocket very carefully, allowing a corner—it happened to be the corner bearing the embroidered monogram—to protrude carelessly. [29]

As he neared Sohmer he passed a group of four boys lying on the grass beneath the trees. Their

conversation dwindled as he approached, ceased entirely as he came abreast and then went on again subduedly after he had gone by. His former irritation returned. What was there about him to make fellows stare or giggle or smile? Even down town he had noticed it, and now, although he could not hear what was being said behind him, [he felt that he was being discussed](#). He was conscious of being better dressed than any of the boys he had seen yet, there was nothing unusual in his looks so far as he knew and he believed that he carried himself and walked in an ordinary manner. He decided again that they were all a lot of savages or “small town” gykes. He was glad he was leaving them tomorrow.

[30]

Back in Number 17, he found that Dobbins had gone out. In the bedroom that remarkable youth's suit of rough red-brown material—it was much too heavy for summer wear and reminded Myron somewhat of a horse-blanket—that he had worn on his arrival lay carelessly tossed across a bed. It was the bed that Myron had chosen for himself, and he distastefully removed the clothes to the other one. As he did so he looked for the maker's tag inside the collar and smiled ironically when he read “Bon Ton Brand.”

“Ready-made,” he murmured.

Dobbins had decorated the top of his chiffonier with two photographs and Myron examined them. One was a group picture of four persons; a woman rather thin and angular but with a kind and sweet face, a girl of some fourteen years, awkward and staring, and two younger girls, the littlest perhaps six. All were dressed in their finest and all, at least to Myron's sophisticated sight, were dowdy. He concluded that the persons were Dobbins' mother and sisters. The second photograph was a more ambitious affair and showed a man of about forty years. He had a square, much seamed face from which two keen eyes looked straight at the beholder. A funny little patch of beard adorned the chin and above it a wide mouth was drawn severely down at the corners. In the photograph the man looked stern and hard and even cross, Myron thought, but there was something nice about the countenance in spite of that, something suggesting that behind the weathered face were clean thoughts and kindness.

[31]

“That's the Spruce Gum King,” he reflected. “I guess if he hadn't been scared at the camera he'd have looked rather a fine old chap, in spite of the little bunch of whiskers. He looks something like Dobbins, too: same sort of eyes and—and same expression about the chin. Only Dobbins is more lazy and good-natured, I guess.”

Later, his trunks came—there were two of them—and he had the expressman set them behind the door, one atop the other. There was no sense in opening them, for his kit-bag provided all he needed for the night. By that time it was nearing the supper hour and there was a rustling in the leaves of the lindens and the air was cooler. He told himself that whether Dobbins ever returned was nothing to him, and yet he found himself listening for the other's heavy tread in the corridor. He wondered where Dobbins had gone, and rather resented his absence. The magazine which he had been reading beside the open window ceased to hold his attention and he glanced at his watch. A quarter to six. The supper hour was six o'clock. He had looked that up in his copy of the school catalogue. And you ate in Alumni Hall, which, as the plan of the school showed, was the building on the extreme left of the line. Finally Myron stripped to his waist and had a good splurge with soap and water. Some kindly soul had supplied a towel and it wasn't until he was through using it that he saw the inscription “Dobbins” on one end.

[32]

“Well, how was I to know?” he grumbled. “Maybe I'd better dig into the trunk and get out a few of my own.”

But after supper would do, and just now he was feeling decidedly hungry, and washing up had refreshed him and made life look more pleasant. He hoped there would be something fit to eat, but he didn't expect it. He was getting back into his clothes when the approach of his temporary room-mate was announced from some distance down the hall by the *clump-clump* of heavy shoes. Dobbins was peculiarly ungentle with doors. He flung them open and didn't care what happened to them afterwards. In the present case the door crashed back against the trunks behind it with a most annoying *bang*, but Dobbins didn't appear to have heard it. He was strangely attired, was Dobbins, and Myron, one arm in his shirt, gazed in astonishment and for a moment forgot to go on with his dressing.

[33]

A faded yellowish-brown jersey with half of the left sleeve missing and the other torn and mended—and torn and not mended—was surmounted by a canvas football jacket held together down the front with a black shoe-lace and a piece of twine. The jacket was so old and stained that Myron could easily believe it an heirloom, something handed down through generations of football-playing Dobbinses! A pair of rather new khaki pants, woollen stockings of brown twice ringed with light blue that well matched the jersey in condition, and scuffed and scarred football shoes completed the costume. Dobbins' hair was every which way and there was more or less dirt on his broad countenance through which the perspiration had flowed in little rivulets with interesting results.

“Hello, kiddo!” Dobbins greeted jovially. “How's the grouch coming on? Say, they've got a swell gridiron here; two or three of 'em, in fact. Wonderful turf. It's a pleasure to fall on it, honest! Hear from your old man yet?”

[34]

“Hardly,” replied Myron drily. “What have you been doing?”

“Me? Sweating, son, mostly. Practising football some, too.”

“Oh! I didn't know you played.”

“Me? That guy Camp and I wrote the rules! Looks like we had enough fellers to build forty

teams. Must have been 'most a thousand of 'em over there. Every time I turned around I trod on some one. You didn't go over, eh?"

"No, I—I was busy. Besides, I didn't know they were holding practice today. I supposed they'd start tomorrow."

"Been at it three days already, I hear. Got a coach here that looks like he knew his business, Foster. Ever try football?"

"I've played some," answered Myron, with a smile that seemed to combine patience and pity. "I expect to go out for it when I get settled somewhere."

"Still thinking of leaving, are you? You're going to lose a mighty good school, son. I sure do like this place. Well, I've got a hunger like a river-boss. Guess I'll get back to store clothes and find the trough. You going now?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, tell 'em to save a little of everything for me." Dobbins' voice came muffled from above the basin in the bedroom, and Myron, remembering the towel, hurried out.

CHAPTER IV

MYRON DECIDES TO STAY

At dining hall it appeared that places had not yet been assigned and Myron was conducted to a seat between a large, stout youth who seemed afflicted with asthma and a shy, red-cheeked boy who promptly upset his glass of milk when Myron asked for the biscuits. Rather to his surprise, the food was excellent and plentiful. There were many tables, each seating ten boys, and most of them were filled when Myron reached the hall. There was a good deal of noise, as was natural when nearly four hundred normally healthy boys were being fed. At Myron's table no one appeared to be acquainted with any one else and in consequence there was little conversation. The asthmatic youth wheezily ventured a remark, but Myron's reply was not encouraging and the youth gave all his attention again to dropping bits of biscuit in his stewed pears and salvaging them noisily. Myron was glad when the stout chap, finding nothing else to devour, sighed heavily and left the table. His place was filled again, however, a moment later by a clean-cut fellow of about nineteen years, a good-looking, neatly-dressed boy of what Myron mentally called his own sort. Conversation with him seemed natural and desirable, and Myron broke the ice by offering the biscuits. The newcomer accepted one, said "Thanks" politely and cast a brief and appraising glance over his neighbour.

"They're not bad," said Myron.

"No, they never are," answered the other. "I wonder if you can reach the butter."

Myron could and did. "Not up to the biscuits," he offered.

"No? What seems to be wrong with it?"

"Too salty for me."

"I see. Well, you'd naturally like it fresh."

Myron shot a covert and suspicious glance at the other. It seemed to him that there had been a faint emphasis on the word "fresh." Perhaps he had only imagined it, though, for his neighbour's expression was quite guileless. He was leisurely buttering a portion of the biscuit and appeared to have forgotten Myron's existence. Myron felt faintly uncomfortable and applied himself silently to his food. Across the board another chair was pushed back and, almost before its occupant was out of it, again taken. Myron observed rather annoyedly that the new occupant of the place was Dobbins. He nodded across and dropped his eyes to his plate. He hoped that Dobbins wouldn't try to converse. Somehow, he didn't want the chap at his right to think him a friend of Dobbins'. But Dobbins, after an approving look about the table, did just what Myron had hoped he wouldn't do.

"How you making out, Foster?" he inquired. "Grub meeting your approval?"

"Yes, thanks," responded Myron coldly.

"That's good. I see you—Hello!"

"Hello," said the boy at Myron's right affably. "How do you feel now?"

"Great! It sure was hot, though. Bet you I dropped five pounds this afternoon. But I'll get it back right now if they'll give me half a chance!" Dobbins chuckled and Myron's neighbour smiled responsively. Myron wondered how Dobbins and this chap beside him happened to be so chummy. He wondered still more when, a minute later, his neighbour changed his seat for one just vacated beside Dobbins, and entered into an animated conversation with him. Myron couldn't catch more than an occasional word above the noise of talking and clattering dishes, but he knew that the subject of their discourse was football. He was glad when he had finished his supper and could leave the table.

There was a reception to the new students that evening at the Principal's residence, but Myron

didn't go. What was the use, when by noon tomorrow he would have shaken the dust of Warne from his shoes and departed for a school where fellows of his station and worth were understood and appreciated? Joe Dobbins, however, attended and didn't get back to the room in Sohmer until nearly ten o'clock, by which time Myron had exhausted all the reading matter he could find and, pyjama-clad, was sitting at a window and moodily looking out into the dimly lighted yard. Joe entered in his usual crash-bang manner and breezily skimmed his hat toward the table. It missed the table and went to the floor, where, so far as its owner was concerned, it was allowed to stay. Myron reflected that it wasn't hard to account for the battered condition of that hat.

"Heard from your old man yet?" asked Joe, dropping into a chair and stretching his long legs across the floor.

"Meaning my father?" asked Myron stiffly.

"Yep. Has he telegraphed?"

"No, unless he's sent a night message. He might. Sometimes he doesn't get back from the yard until rather late." [40]

"Yard? What sort of yard?"

"Shipyard. He builds boats."

"Oh, boatyard, you mean. I know a fellow in Portland has a boatyard. Makes some crackjack sloops."

"We build ships," corrected Myron patiently. "Battleships, passenger ships, cargo carriers and such. Some of them are whopping big ones: sixteen and eighteen thousand tons."

"Gosh! I'd like to see that place. I suppose you'll be going to work with him when you get through here."

"Not exactly. I shall go through college first, of course."

"Oh! Well, say, honest injun, Foster, do you think a college course cuts any ice with a fellow? The old man says I can go to a college—if I can get in,—but I don't know. I wouldn't get through until I was twenty-two or twenty-three, and seems to me that's wasting a lot of time. What do you think?"

"Depends, I suppose, on—on the individual case. If you feel that you want to get to work in the chewing-gum factory and can't afford to go through college—"

"Where do you get that chewing-gum factory stuff?" asked Joe. [41]

"Why, I thought you said your father made spruce gum."

"No, the Lord makes it. The old man gathers it and sells it. Spruce gum is the resin of spruce trees, kiddo."

"Oh," said Myron vaguely. "Well, I dare say he will need you to help him gather it. In your case, Dobbins, going through college might be wasting time."

Joe laughed.

"What's the joke?" asked the other suspiciously.

"Well, I was having what you call a mind picture of the old man and me picking that gum. Know how many tons of the stuff he handles in a year? Nearly a hundred and thirty: about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds! He has over a hundred pickers employed, and buys a lot from fellows who pick on their own hook."

"Oh!" said Myron. "Well, how was I to know? You distinctly said the Lord made it and your father gathered it, didn't you?"

"That's right; my error, kiddo—"

"Kindly cut out that—"

"Sorry; I forgot. Well, I don't have to worry about college just yet, do I? We'll see first if I can stick here long enough to get my time! I wouldn't mind playing football on a good college team, though: Harvard or Yale or Dartmouth or one of those big 'uns." [42]

"Probably not," replied Myron drily. "Nobody would. I wouldn't myself." Somehow he managed to convey the impression that in his case such a thing was not only possible but probable, but that for Joe to set his hopes so high was absurd. Joe's greenish-grey eyes flickered once, but he made no comment. Instead:

"You played much?" he asked.

"Quite a bit," answered the other carelessly. "I captained the Port Foster High team last fall."

"Must have then! Where'd you play?"

"Position? Left half. End the year before that. What do you play?"

"Me? Oh, most anything in the line. I'm not fussy. Played tackle most of last year. Like to play guard better, though. Football's a great game, isn't it?"

"Not bad," acknowledged Myron. "By the way, who was the fellow you were so thick with at supper tonight?"

"Him? Name's Keith or something. Played on last year's team and was coaching the linemen [43]

today. Nice guy. Bet he can play, too.”

“Looked rather light to me,” commented Myron.

“Think so? Maybe. Anyway, he knows how to drill the line, or I’m a Dutchman. What time is it? I’m getting sleepy. You weren’t over at the party, were you?”

“No, it didn’t interest me. As I’m not going to stay, why be bored by that sort of thing?”

“Hm,” said Joe.

“What’s ‘Hm’ mean?”

“Nothing. Just thinking. Say, what’s your objection to this place, Foster? If it’s just me, why, say, I’ll get out gladly. Fellow I met tonight told me he has a dandy room in the village. I’m not fussy about living on the campus.”

“Oh, it isn’t just that,” said Myron. “I don’t like the—the atmosphere here.”

“Well, it is sort of close tonight, but I guess it would be anywhere in this part of the country. September’s likely to—”

“I wasn’t referring to the air,” corrected the other loftily. “I used the word in its other sense.”

“Didn’t know it had another sense,” said Joe cheerfully. “All right. But I was just thinking that if you had to have this place to yourself I could beat it, and no hard feelings.”

“They’d stick some one else in here, I guess. Besides, I wouldn’t want to put you out. After all, you’ve got as much right here as I have, I suppose.” That statement had a rather dubious sound, however, and again Joe’s eyes flickered and the very ghost of a smile hovered for an instant about the corners of his wide mouth.

“Yeah, but the next chap might be more your style, Foster. I’m sort of rough-and-ready, I guess. Don’t run much to etiquette and wouldn’t know what to do in one of those silk collars you wear. I should think they’d make your neck awfully warm.” And Joe ran a finger around inside his own very low linen collar apprehensively.

“I hope I haven’t said anything to make you think that I—that you—”

“Oh, no, you haven’t *said* anything: at least, not much: but I can see that I’d be *persona non compos*, or whatever the word is, around these diggings. You think it over and let me know. I guess that Hoyt guy wouldn’t mind if I got a room outside somewhere. Well, here’s where I hit the hay.”

“There’s no sense in my thinking it over,” answered Myron a bit querulously, “as I tell you I’m not going to stay here.”

“Don’t think there’s any doubt about it, eh?”

“Certainly not!”

“All right. I was only thinking that if you *did* stay—”

“I haven’t the least intention of staying. I wish you’d get that fixed in your mind, Dobbins.”

“Sure! I’ll go to sleep and dream about it!”

If Myron dreamed of anything he had no recollection of having done so in the morning. He awoke in a far more cheerful frame of mind to find a cool and fragrant breeze flapping the curtain and a patch of golden sunlight lying across his bed. He had slept like a log. A glance at the neighbouring bed showed that Joe Dobbins was up, although Myron’s watch proved the time to be still short of seven-thirty. From across the campus a bell was ringing loudly. It was doubtless that sound that had awakened him. Usually he turned over and had a nap before getting up, but this morning, although he buried his head in the pillow again, sleep didn’t return to him. Perhaps it was just as well, he reflected, for that telegram from his father ought to be along soon, and he would probably have a busy morning getting away. So far he had not considered what he would do in case they couldn’t take him at Kenwood. He rather hoped they could, though. It would be a big satisfaction, and an amusing one, too, to play on the Kenwood eleven and show these unappreciative fellows at Parkinson what they had missed! Myron could play football and knew it, and knew as well that in losing his services Parkinson was losing something worth while. It would be fun to say carelessly to some Parkinson fellow after he had aided Kenwood to beat her rival: “Yes, I did think of going to your school: in fact, I actually spent a night there: but they treated me rather rotten and I got out. They promised me a room to myself, you know, and then tried to make me go in with another chap. It was rather coarse work, and I told them so before I left.” Whereupon the Parkinson boy would tell it around and there’d be regrets galore.

That was a pleasing dream, and under the exciting influence of it Myron jumped out of bed and sought a bath. While he was shivering in the icy water he recalled the fact that there was such a thing as chapel or morning prayers or something, and he wondered if he was under obligations to attend that ceremony. He decided the question in the negative and, returning to his room, dressed leisurely, selecting a grey tie with a yellow figure and a yellow handkerchief with a narrow grey border. The bell had long since ceased its clamour and peace had settled over the yard. Dressed, he went downstairs. In the corridor, close by the entrance, was a notice board and a letter rack. He didn’t bother to peruse the few notices nor would he have paid any attention to the rack had his fleeting glance not been arrested by the sight of a buff envelope. He stopped and looked more closely. It was a telegram and, yes, it was addressed to Myron W. Foster, Parkinson

School, Warne, Mass. In blue pencil was "S 17."

At last! He took it to the entrance and paused on the top step in the sunlight and tore off an end of the envelope very carefully. Then he withdrew the folded sheet of buff paper and with a satisfied smile began to read it. But the smile vanished in the next instant and, although he read the message through a second and even a third time, he could not make the sense of it correspond with his expectation.

"Your mother and I very sorry about your room letter from school arrived after your departure explaining satisfactorily Think you had better stay there however for the present and arrange for single suite when same can be had Love from us both Father."

CHAPTER V ON THE GRIDIRON

[48]

Myron's connection with Parkinson School began inauspiciously. After an eleventh-hour effort to get his studies scheduled, and the discovery that he was required to take two courses he didn't want to take and to omit one that he did, a summons came to him to visit the Office. There Mr. Morgan, assistant to the Principal, reminded him that attendance at chapel was compulsory and then announced that there appeared to be some doubt that he could enter the second class owing to the fact that his Latin was not up to the requirements. That was disheartening, for Myron had coached on Latin during the summer and been pronounced fit for the third-year class at Parkinson or any other preparatory school. Yesterday he would have received the announcement with unconcern, but today, since the arrival of that disappointing telegram, he found cause in it for real alarm. At well past seventeen one doesn't like to be put in with fellows who average sixteen, Myron held. As a matter of fact, the third class contained more students of his age than it did of fellows younger, and he would not have found himself out of place there. But he didn't know that, and as a result he pleaded very hard to be allowed to enter the class above. In the end, after much hesitation, and with no very good grace, Mr. Morgan consented.

[49]

"But you'll have to do some hard work, Foster, if you're to stay there. Unless you're willing to, I'd advise you to go into the third."

"I'll work, sir. Maybe I could coach in Latin."

"Yes, you could do that. If you like, I'll give you the address of a fellow who does a good deal of tutoring and gets excellent results." He wrote the address on a slip and Myron tucked it in his pocket. "Well, that's all, I think. I hope you will get on nicely, Foster. Let me see, your adviser is ___"

"Mr. Cooper, sir."

"Good. Don't hesitate to consult him. He's a fine man and you'll like him immensely, I think. Good morning."

Myron had a spare hour after dinner and spent it unpacking. When some of his things had been distributed around the study the place really looked fairly homelike and attractive, and he began to look forward to a year at Parkinson with more equanimity. If only he wasn't handicapped with his Latin, he thought, things wouldn't be so bad. With Dobbins out of the way and the study and bedroom to himself, he guessed he could get along fairly comfortably. There was a half-hour of physics at three, and after that he was through for the day. He returned to Sohmer and changed into his football togs, which, unlike the nondescript garments worn by Joe Dobbins, were fairly new and of the best materials. When he had examined himself critically and appreciatively in the glass he sauntered downstairs, skirted the end of the gymnasium building and had his first real look at the playground.

[50]

Nearly twelve acres of still green turf stretched before him, his view uninterrupted save by the grandstand directly before him. To his left were the tennis courts, both clay and grass, and about them white-clad figures darted. Nearer at hand, the blue-grey running track inclosed the first team gridiron. Beyond that two more pairs of goal-posts met his sight, and then the baseball diamonds filled the balance of the field. Track and gridirons and diamonds were already occupied, and the nearer grandstand held a handful of boys who had gathered in the warm sunlight to watch the activities. Football practice was called for three-thirty, and it was nearly four when Myron reached the field. He was in no hurry to join the panting and perspiring squads that trotted around over the turf, and so he perched himself on one of the lower seats of the stand and looked the situation over.

[51]

Not far away the manager and assistant manager, both earnest-looking youths, talked to a stout man in a faded brown sweater who later turned out to be the trainer, Billy Goode. Myron wondered where the coach might be, but he couldn't find any one who much resembled his idea of what that gentleman should look like. However, with more than a hundred fellows at work out there it was easy enough to overlook him. A squad of advanced players trotted near, going through elementary signal work. Rather to Myron's surprise, Joe Dobbins was amongst them, sandwiched between two capable-looking youths in togs quite as disreputable as his. Joe was acting as right guard, it seemed. Myron's opinion of Joe as a football player went up a peg, for it

was fairly evident that this squad was made up of last-year fellows and probably contained the nucleus of what in a few days would be known as the first squad. About this time Myron became aware that some of the fellows about him on the grandstand were viewing him curiously. Doubtless they were wondering why, being in playing togs, he didn't get down there and go to work. Of course it was none of their business, but maybe it was time he found the coach and reported.

[52]

He made inquiry of the manager, a slim, very alert youth armed with a formidable notebook in which he was making entries when Myron approached. "Mr. Driscoll? He's around here somewhere." The manager, whose name was Farnsworth, looked frowningly about the field. "Yes, there he is down there, the man with the blue sweater. Are you just reporting for practice?"

"Yes," answered Myron. "I wasn't out yesterday."

"What's the name?" asked Farnsworth briskly.

"Foster."

"Foster?" The manager fluttered the leaves of the big notebook until he found the F's. Then: "What are the initials, Foster?"

"M. W."

"Class?"

"Third."

"Ever played before?"

"Naturally." Farnsworth shot a quick glance.

"Where?" he asked.

"Port Foster High School Team, Port Foster, Delaware. I played two years there."

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"Line or backfield?"

"Backfield: before that at end."

"Had your physical exam yet?"

"No, I didn't know about it. Where do I take it?"

"See Mr. Tasser, in the gym. Any time between ten and twelve and four and six. Better do it today. Rules are rather strict, Foster. All right. Report to Cummins. He's handling the new men. You'll find him down there by the east goal: ask any one."

"I though I'd tell the coach——"

"Not necessary. Cummins'll look after you."

Myron shrugged mentally and turned his steps toward the indicated location. "One of those smart Alecks," he thought. "Thinks he's the whole push. All right, it's not my business to tell him his. If they want me to waste my time with the beginners it's their funeral."

Cummins wasn't difficult to find. Myron heard his bark long before he reached him. Nearly thirty youths, most of them youngsters of fourteen and fifteen, although here and there an older boy was to be noticed, were learning to handle the ball. Cummins appeared to be about eighteen, a heavily-built chap with a shock of reddish-brown hair and a round face liberally spattered with freckles. Just now the face was scowling ferociously and Cummins was sneering stridently at his charges. Myron took an instant dislike to Mr. Charles Cummins, and, or so it appeared, Mr. Charles Cummins took an equal dislike to Myron.

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"Well, well, *well*, WELL!!" barked Cummins as Myron came up. "What do you fellows think this is? A lawn party or a sewing circle or what? Maybe you're waiting for the ice-cream to be served? Listen just one minute, will you? *Stop that ball*, you long-legged fellow! Now then, let's understand each other. This is football practice. Get that? The idea is to learn to hold that ball without having it get away from you, and to catch it and to pass it. We aren't doing aesthetic dancing or—acting in a pageant. This is *work*, W-O-R-K, work! Any of you who are out here just to get the air or to tan your necks can quit right now. I'm here to show you hopeless ninnies how to handle a football, and I propose to do it if it takes from now to Christmas, and the sooner you put your minds on what you're doing and *try* a little, the sooner you'll get through. Now start that ball around again and, for the love of limes, remember some of the things I've told you. When you catch it, grab it with both hands and hug it. It isn't an egg. It won't break. That's the idea, Judson, or whatever your name is. Go ahead, go ahead! Get some ginger into it! Pass it along! Don't go to sleep. I said hug it, not fondle it, Whittier! When you—Hello, more trouble?"

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"The manager fellow told me to report to you," said Myron as Cummins turned a baleful gaze on him.

"Oh, the 'manager fellow' told you that, did he? What does the 'coach fellow' say?"

"I haven't seen the coach yet," answered Myron coldly.

"Haven't you? Why, say, maybe you won't like him! Don't you think you ought to look him over first? It would be fierce if you didn't happen to approve of him. What's your name?"

"Foster."

"All right, Foster, you push right in there and show me how you catch a football. Something tells me that my troubles are all over now that you've joined this aggregation of stars!"

Myron suppressed the angry retort that sprang to his lips and took his place in the big circle. "Bounder!" he muttered as he did so. The boy next to him on the left heard and snickered, and Cummins guessed the reason. Unseen of Myron, he grinned. "When you can get 'em mad," he said to himself, "there's hope for 'em."

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When the ball was passed to Myron he caught it deftly, bending his body over it, and then promptly sped it on to the youth who had snickered. The latter was unaccustomed to such speed and was not ready, and the ball bounded away. He lumbered after it and scooped it up, returning to his place with an accusing scowl for Myron.

"Think you're smart, I suppose," he grumbled.

"Sorry," said Myron, "but you ought to be ready for it."

"Is that so? Well——"

"Cut out that talking!" barked Cummins. "Speed it up, fellows!"

There was ten minutes more of the dreary work, during which Myron mechanically received the pigskin and sent it on to the next in the circle without a hitch. If he expected to win commendation from Cummins, however, he was disappointed. Cummins was eloquent with criticism, but never once did he utter a word of approval. At last:

"That'll do for that, fellows," he called. "You may rest a minute. Maybe some of you'll get your strength back." He approached Myron with an accusing scowl. "What are you doing in this bunch?" he demanded. "You don't belong here."

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"I was sent here," replied Myron warmly.

"Didn't you have sense enough to tell Farnsworth you weren't a greenie? Think I've got nothing to do but waste my time?"

"Well, you're not the only one who's doing it, are you? What about my time?"

"That's your affair. I didn't want you, believe me! You ought to have told him you knew something about a football. He's no mind-reader, you know."

"I told him I'd played two years on a high school team——"

"Oh! That explains it. You high school ginks usually don't know enough football to make the first year team. Guess Farnsworth thought you were like the run of 'em."

"Maybe," replied Myron indifferently, "but it's not my business to teach you fellows how to run your affairs."

"Hard luck for us, isn't it? Well, say, Mr. 'Igh and 'Aughty, you trek across there and tell Farnsworth I say you're graduated from my bunch. Get it? Tell him to put you somewhere else, and tell him I don't care where it is!"

"Thanks," returned Myron with deep sarcasm. "I'm horribly sorry to leave you, though. It's a real pleasure working under such a gentlemanly instructor, Mr. Cummins."

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Cummins watched him for a long moment with his mouth open. "Well, what do you know about that?" he murmured at last. "The cheeky beggar!" Then he grinned again and, surprising amused and delighted expressions on the countenances of those of his squad who had been near enough to overhear the conversation, quickly changed the grin for a scowl. "All right now!" he barked. "Line up along there. Who's got the ball? Let's see what you pin-heads know about starting."

Myron's message to Farnsworth resulted in his finishing the practice with a group of fellows whose education had progressed beyond the rudimentary stage. Toward the last of the period he was put to catching punts with a half-dozen other backfield candidates and performed to his own satisfaction at least. There was no scrimmage today, nor was there any for several days following, and at five o'clock Coach Driscoll sent them off to the showers. Later Myron went upstairs and found the physical director and underwent his examination, obtaining a chart filled with perplexing lines and puzzling figures and official permission to engage in "any form of athletics approved by the Committee." After which he returned rather wearily to Number 17 Sohmer and Joe Dobbins.

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CHAPTER VI

"A. T. MERRIMAN"

[60]

The next forenoon Myron set off in a spare hour to find the tutor whose address Mr. Morgan had given him. If he had cherished the notion of possibly getting along without coaching in Latin his experiences that morning had banished it. Mr. Addicks, or Old Addie, as he was called, was a likable sort and popular with the students, but he was capable of a gentle sarcasm that was horribly effective with any one whose skin was less thick than that of a rhinoceros, and an hour or so ago he had caused Myron to heartily wish himself small enough to creep into a floor crack and pull some dust over him! No use talking, Myron told himself as he set forth for Mill Street, he'd have to find this chap and get right to work. He wouldn't face that horrible Addicks again until he had put in a solid week of being tutored. It would get him in bad at the Office, maybe, if

the instructor called on him very often in that week, for he would just say "Not prepared," but anything was to be preferred to standing up there like a jay and letting Addicks make fun of him!

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When he reached the head of School Street he pulled the slip of paper again from his pocket and made sure of the address. "A. T. Merriman, 109 Mill Street," was what was written there. He asked his way at the next corner and was directed across the railroad. "Mill Street runs at right angles to the track," said the citizen who was directing him. "You'll see a granite building after you pass the crossing. That's Whitwell's Mill. The street you want runs along the farther side of it." Myron thanked him and went on down School Street. The obliging citizen gazed after him in mingled surprise and admiration.

"Well, he's certainly a dressy boy," he murmured. "Must be Old John W. Croesus's son!"

Mill Street wasn't far and 109 was soon found, but the character of the district wasn't at all to Myron's liking. Ragged and dirty children overflowed the sidewalks and played in the cobbled roadway, slatternly women gossiped from open windows, dejected-looking men lounged at the corners, stray cats rummaged the gutters. The houses, frame structures whose dingy clapboards were flush with the street, had apparently seen far better days. Now dust and grime lay thick on them and many a window was wanting a pane of glass. The prospect of penetrating to such a place every day was revolting, and, having found the numerals "109" above a sagging porch, Myron was strongly inclined to turn back. But he didn't, and a tinkle that followed his pull at the rusty knob beside the door brought a stout and frowsy woman who wiped her hands on her apron as she pulled the portal open.

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"Mr. Merriman?" inquired Myron.

"I don't know is he in, sir. One flight up and you'll see his name on the door. If you come again, sir, just you step right in. The door ain't never locked in the daytime."

Myron mounted a creaky stairway guiltless of carpet and found himself in a narrow hall from which four doors opened. In spite of dinginess and want of repairs, the interior of 109 was, he had to acknowledge, astonishingly clean. One of the doors did present a card to the inquiring gaze, but in the gloom its inscription was not decipherable and so Myron chanced it and knocked. A voice answered from beyond the portal and nearly simultaneously a dog barked sharply. Myron entered.

The room was large and well lighted from two sides. It was also particularly devoid of furniture, or so it looked to the visitor. A large deal table strewn with papers and piled with books stood near the centre of the apartment where the cross light from the two pairs of windows fell on it. The floor was carpetless, but two scraps of straw matting saved it from utter bareness. There was a bench under the windows on one side and a flattened cushion and two faded pillows adorned it. What seemed to Myron the narrowest bed in the whole wide world, an unlovely thing of black iron rails, was pushed into a corner, and beside it was a box from which overflowed a grey blanket. Three chairs, one a decrepit armchair from whose leather covering the horsehair stuffing protruded in many places, stood about. There was also a bureau and a washstand. On the end of the former stood a small gas-stove and various pans and cooking utensils. Books, mostly sober-sided, dry-looking volumes, lay everywhere, on table, bureau, window-seat, chair and even on the floor. Between the several articles of furniture lay broad and arid expanses of unpainted flooring.

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At first glance the room appeared to be inhabited only by a tall, thin but prepossessing youth of perhaps twenty years and a Scottish terrier whose age was a matter for conjecture since her countenance was fairly well hidden by sandy hair. The youth was seated at the deal table and the terrier was halfway between box and door, growling inquiringly at the intruder. At Myron's entry Merriman tilted back in his chair, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and said "Good morning" in a deep, pleasant voice. Then he added mildly: "Shut up, Tess, or I'll murder you." The terrier gave a last growl and retired to the box. As she settled down in it a series of astonishing squeaks emerged. Myron looked across startledly and Merriman laughed.

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"Puppies," he explained. "Six of them. That's why she's so ferocious. Seems to think every one who comes upstairs is a kidnapper. I tell her the silly things are too ugly to tempt any one, but she doesn't believe me."

"Will she let me see them?" asked Myron eagerly.

"Oh, yes." Merriman drew his long length from the chair and led the way to the box. "Now then, old lady, pile out of here and let the gentleman have a look at your ugly ducklings."

The terrier made no objection to being removed, but the puppies cried dismally at the parting. Myron chuckled. "Funny things!" he exclaimed. "Why, they haven't got their eyes open yet!"

"No, they're only six days old. How's this one for a butter-ball? Isn't he a fat rascal? All right, Tess, we won't hurt them. I vouch for the gentleman. He never stole a puppy in all his innocent young life."

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"I never did," Myron corroborated, "but I'd like to start right now!"

"Like dogs, eh?" asked the host.

"Yes, indeed. Funny thing is, though, that I've never owned one."

"No? How does that happen?"

"I don't know. My mother thinks they're rather a nuisance around the house. Still, I dare say she'd have let me kept one if I'd insisted. I don't suppose you—you'd care to sell one of those?"

"Oh, yes, I would. I'll have to either sell them or give them: unless I send them off to the happy hunting ground."

"Really? How much would they be?"

"The lot?" asked Merriman, a twinkle in his eye.

"Gee, no! One!"

"Five dollars. Tess is good stock, and the father is a thoroughbred belonging to Terrill, the stableman on Centre Street. Got a place to keep him?"

"I'd forgot about that," owned Myron. "I'm afraid not. They wouldn't let me have him in Sohmer, would they?"

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"Scarcely!" laughed the other. "All right, old lady, back you go. Sit down—ah—What's the name, please?"

"Foster. Mr. Morgan gave me your address. I want some tutoring in Latin, and he said he thought you could take me on."

"Possibly. Just dump those books on the seat there. What hours do you have free, Foster?"

"This hour in the morning and any time in the evening."

"What about afternoon?"

"I'm trying for the football team and that doesn't leave me much time afternoons. Still, I guess we're usually through by five."

Merriman shook his head. "I'd rather not waste my time and yours, Foster. Football practice doesn't leave a fellow in very good trim for tutoring. Better say the evening, I guess. How would seven to nine do?"

"Two hours?" asked Myron startledly.

"Yes, you can't accomplish much in less. I can't, anyhow."

"Very well. Seven to nine. Shall I come here or——"

"I'll come to you. What's the number in Sohmer? Seventeen? All right. We'll begin tomorrow. My terms are a dollar an hour. You pay for the time it takes me to get to you, usually about ten minutes. Can you arrange with your room-mate to let us have the place to ourselves at that time?"

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"Oh, yes," replied Myron confidently.

"Good. Now pull your chair over here, please, and we'll see what the job is."

Merriman had a lean face from which two dark brown eyes looked keenly forth. His mouth was broad and his nose straight and long. A high forehead, a deep upper lip and a firmly pointed chin added to the general effect of length. You couldn't have called him handsome, by any stretch of the imagination, but there was something attractive in his homeliness. Perhaps it was the expression of the eyes or perhaps the smile that hovered continuously about the wide mouth. He dressed, Myron reflected, as wretchedly as Joe Dobbins: more wretchedly, in fact, for Joe's clothes were at least new and good of their kind, whereas Merriman's things were old, frayed, ill-fitting. His trousers, which bagged so at the knees that they made Merriman look crooked, had been a positive shock to the visitor. But in spite of attire and surroundings, Myron liked this new acquaintance. Above all, he liked his voice. It was deep without being gruff and had a kind of—of pleasant kindness in it, he thought. After all, it was no fault to be poor if you couldn't help it, he supposed; and he had known fellows back home—not intimately, of course, but well enough to talk to—who, while poor, were really splendid chaps.

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Presently Merriman finished his questions and finished jotting down little lines and twirls and pot-hooks on a scrap of paper. Myron rather wished he knew shorthand too. It looked ridiculously easy the way Merriman did it. "All right, thanks," said the latter as he laid his pencil down. "I think I know what we've got ahead of us. Frankly, I don't see how they let you into the third with so little Latin, Foster. But we'll correct that. How are you at learning, by the way? Does it come easy or do you have to grind hard?"

"Why, I think I learn things fairly easily," replied Myron doubtfully. "Of course, Latin looks hard to me because I've never had much of it, but I think—I hope you won't find me too stupid." Afterwards, recalling the visit, it struck him as odd that he should have said that. Usually he didn't trouble greatly about whether folks found him one way or another. He was Myron Foster, take him or leave him!

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"I shan't," answered Merriman. "I've had all sorts and I always manage to get results."

"Do you do much tutoring?" Myron asked.

"A good deal. Not so much now as later. Spring's my busy time."

"I shouldn't think you'd have time for your own studies."

"I'm not taking much this year. Only four courses. I could have finished last spring, but I wasn't quite ready for college then. By the way, if you hear of any one wanting a nice puppy I wish you'd send them to me. I can't keep all that litter and I'd hate to kill the poor little tykes."

"I will," Myron assured him. "And—and I'm not sure I shan't buy one myself. I suppose I could find some one to keep him for me."

"I think so. Well, good morning. Say good-bye to the gentleman, Tess."

The terrier barked twice as Myron closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER VII

WITH THE AWKWARD SQUAD

[70]

"Sure! That's all right," said Joe Dobbins. "If I want to dig I can trot over to the library or somewhere. Seven to nine, you said?"

"Yes, but it won't be for very long, I guess: maybe only a couple of weeks. Merriman seemed an awfully clever sort of a chap."

"Must be if he can teach Latin! I never did see the good of that stuff, anyway." Joe fluttered the pages of the book he had been studying. After a moment he said: "Say, Foster, you're a sort of sartorial authority—how's that for language, eh?—and you know what's what in the line of clothes, I guess. Now I wish you'd tell me honestly if there's anything wrong with the things I wear. They look all right to me, but I notice two or three of the fellows sort of piping 'em off like they were wondering about 'em. What's wrong with the duds?" And Joe glanced over the grey suit, with the large green and blue threads running through it, that he was wearing.

"Why, they——" But Myron paused. Three days before he would not have hesitated to render a frank opinion of the clothes; would have welcomed the opportunity, in fact: but this afternoon he found that he didn't want to hurt Joe's feelings.

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"Spit it out, kiddo—I mean Foster! Let's know the worst."

"Well, I suppose they're good material and well made, Dobbins, but the fact is they—they're different, if you see what I mean."

"I don't. What *do* you mean, just? Style all wrong by Fifth Avenue standards?"

"By any standard," replied Myron firmly. "They look ready-made."

"But, gee, they *are* ready-made! I never had a suit made to order in my life. Why should I? I'm not hump-backed or—or got one leg longer than the other!"

"Some ready-made clothes don't look it, though," explained Myron. "Yours do. Did you get them in Portland?"

"Sure. We've got some dandy stores in Portland."

"Did that suit come from the best one?" asked Myron drily.

"N-no, it didn't, to tell the hideous truth." Joe chuckled. "You see, the old man has a friend who runs a store and we've both got sort of used to dealing with this guy. He's a pretty square sort, too; a Canuck. Peter Lafavour's his name. But I guess maybe Peter doesn't know so much about style as he makes out to, eh? I always sort of liked these duds, though: they're sort of—er—snappy, eh?"

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Myron smiled. "They're too snappy, Dobbins. That's one out with them. Then they don't fit anywhere. And they look cheap and badly cut."

"Aside from that they're all right, though?" asked Joe hopefully.

"Perhaps, although gentlemen aren't wearing pockets put on at an angle or cuffs on the sleeves."

"And Peter swore that this suit was right as rain!" sighed Joe. "Ain't he the swine? How about my other one?"

"Well, it's better cut and hasn't so many queer folderols," answered Myron, "but it looks a good deal like a grain-sack when you get it on, old man."

"What do you know about that!" Joe shook his head dismally, but Myron caught the irrepressible twinkle in his room-mate's eyes. "Guess I'll have to dig down in the old sock and buy me a new outfit," he continued. "I suppose those tony-looking duds you wear were made to order, eh? Think your tailor could make me a suit if I wrote and told him what size collar I wear?"

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"I'm afraid not, but I saw a tailor shop in the village here today that looked pretty good. Why not try there?"

"Blamed if I don't, kid—Foster! I don't suppose you'd want to go along with me and see that I get what's right? I'd hate to find I had too many buttons on my vest—I mean waistcoat—when the things were done!"

"I don't mind," answered Myron after an imperceptible moment of hesitation, "although you really won't need me if the chap knows his business. No first-class tailor will turn you out anything that isn't correct."

"Yeah, but—well, I'd feel easier in my mind if I had you along. Maybe tomorrow, eh? Somehow these duds I've got on don't make such a hit with me as they did! Coming over to the gym? It's mighty near time for practice."

"In a minute," answered Myron carelessly. "You run along." Then he reflected that if he was to go with Joe to the tailor's the next day he might just as well start in now and get used to being seen with him. "Guess I'm ready, though," he corrected. "Come on."

The distance from Sohmer to the gym was only a matter of yards, and it wasn't until the two reached the entrance of the latter building that they encountered any one. Then, or so Myron imagined, the three fellows who followed them through the big oak door looked curiously from Joe's astounding attire to his own perfectly correct grey flannels. He was glad when the twilight of the corridor was reached, and all the way down the stairs to the locker-room below he was careful to avoid all suggestions of intimacy with Joe. [74]

Football was still in the first rather chaotic phase. An unusually large number of candidates had reported this fall, and, while in theory it was a fine thing to have so much material to select from, in reality it increased the work to be done tremendously. On the second day of school one hundred and twelve boys of all sizes and ages and all degrees of inexperience were on hand, and coach, captain and trainer viewed the gathering helplessly. Today a handful of the original number had dropped out of their own accord, but there were still nearly a hundred left, and when Myron, having changed to his togs, followed the dribble of late arrivals to the field he wondered what on earth would be done with them all. Perhaps Coach Driscoll was wondering the same thing, for there was a perplexed frown on his face as he talked with Billy Goode and contemplatively trickled a football from one hand to the other. [75]

Myron rather liked the looks of Mr. Driscoll. So far he had not even spoken to the coach and doubted if the latter so much as knew of his existence, but there was something in the coach's face and voice and quick, decisive movements that told Myron that he knew his business. "Tod" Driscoll was about thirty, perhaps a year or two more, and had coached at Parkinson for several seasons. He was a Parkinson graduate, but his football reputation had been made at Yale. He was immensely popular with the students, although he made no effort to gain popularity and was the strictest kind of a disciplinarian. Today, while Myron, pausing at the edge of the crowded gridiron a few yards distant, viewed him and speculated about him, the coach showed rather less decision than usual, for twice he gave instructions, once to Billy and once to the manager, and each time changed his mind.

"We've got to find more instructors," Myron heard him say a trifle impatiently. "How about you, Ken? Know enough football to take a bunch of those beginners over to the second team gridiron?" [76]

"I'm afraid not, Coach," answered Kenneth Farnsworth.

"You don't need to know much. What do you say, Billy? Who is there? I've got most of the veterans at work already, and there isn't one of them that shouldn't be learning instead of teaching."

Myron didn't hear the trainer's reply, for at that moment a well-built, light-haired, somewhat harassed youth of apparently nineteen strode up to the group. "Look here, Coach," he began before he was well within talking distance, "what about the backs? We've got to have some get-together work before Saturday's game, haven't we? Cater says you've got him in charge of a kindergarten class, Brown's sewed up the same way, Garrison hasn't shown up——"

"I know, Cap. But what are we going to do with this raft of talent? Some one's got to take hold of them, and I can't take more than twenty. Cummins is about ready to go on strike——"

"It *is* a mess, isn't it?" Captain Mellen turned and viewed the scene puzzledly. "The worst of it is that there probably aren't a dozen in the whole lot worth troubling with."

"True, but we've got to find the dozen," answered Mr. Driscoll. "We can't afford to miss any bets this year, Cap. We'll call the first-choice backs together at four. That'll give us half an hour for kindergarten stuff. But I want a couple more fellows to take hold. Who are they?" [77]

"Search me! Why not double them up, sir?"

"They've been doubled up—or pretty nearly. Cummins has about thirty to look after and Cater twenty-four or five. That's too many. Sixteen's enough for a squad. How about Garrison?"

"He isn't here. I don't know what——"

"He's cut," interposed Farnsworth. "Got a conference at four."

"Conference! Gee, why couldn't he have that some other time?" asked Jud Mellen.

"Time to start, sir," said Farnsworth, looking at his watch.

"All right, let's get at it. But I wish I could think—Who's that fellow there, Mellen?" Mr. Driscoll dropped his voice. Mellen turned and looked at Myron and shook his head.

"I don't know him, Coach. Who is he, Ken?"

"I think"—Farnsworth turned the pages of his book until he had found the F's—"I think his name is Forrest. No, Foster. High school fellow. Two years playing. Passed a corking physical exam." [78]

"Foster!"

Myron, who had been aware that he was under discussion, joined the group. "Yes, sir?" he asked.

"Think you could take about twenty fellows over to the next field and show them how to handle

the ball? You know the sort of stuff, don't you? Passing, falling, starting and so on. Want to try it?"

"Yes, sir, I can do it all right."

"Good! We've got such a mob here today that we're short-handed. Stick to me a minute and I'll round you up a bunch."

"You can't call him exactly modest, can you?" asked the manager of Billy Goode when the others had walked away. "I can do it all right," says he."

"How do you know he can't?" asked Billy. "And if he can there ain't any harm in his saying so, is there? Say, if I was starting my life over again, my friend, I'd say yes to everything like that any one asked me. I missed a lot of good chances by being too modest."

"And truthful?" laughed Kenneth.

"Let it go at modest," said Billy smiling.

Myron received eighteen boys as his portion and led them across to the second team gridiron and set to work. Four other awkward squads adorned the field, the nearer one being under the care of Charles Cummins. Myron smiled secretly when he saw the surprised stare with which Cummins regarded him. When their glances met Cummins nodded shortly. To put his class through the third lesson was no trick for Myron, but it was dreary and tiresome work. It seemed to him that Coach Driscoll must have deliberately apportioned to him the stupidest boys on the field, for of all the awkward squads Myron had ever had anything to do with his was the awkwardest. But some few presently began to respond to treatment and by the time they were jumping out of the line and digging knees and elbows and shoulders into the turf in the effort to land on the trickling pigskin he felt that he hadn't done so badly with them. He didn't say much to them, for his own experience had shown him that too much instruction and criticism only confused the pupil, and neither did he try to impress them with their stupidity. As a result, most of them eventually forgot to be self-conscious and tried to follow instructions. Watching, Myron heard a voice at his elbow and looked around into the face of Cummins, who, giving his own charges a moment of rest, had walked across unnoticed.

"How do *you* like it?" Cummins inquired shortly.

"There are other things I'd rather be doing," replied Myron. He didn't feel particularly friendly toward this chap who had badgered him so a day or two before, and his tone showed it. A smile flickered around the corners of Cummins' mouth.

"Main thing," he said gravely, "is to be patient with them. I find that pays best."

Myron turned and looked at him wonderingly. "That sounds well," he replied sarcastically. Cummins grinned.

"Got it in for me, haven't you?" he said. "Don't blame you—er—Whatever Your Name Is. I was never cut out for a teacher. Besides, I want to get to work myself. What's your line? Tackle?"

"I don't know. Whatever I get, I suppose. Try that again, you chap. Get started quicker. I played half-back last year."

"Guard's my game. Well, I guess I'd better go back and hound those fellows some more. See you again, Foster, if I live."

Myron wondered why Cummins had pretended not to recall his name at first. "Just to be as disagreeable as possible, I guess," he concluded. Cummins' hectoring voice floated across the field just then: "All right, my hearties! Line up again and, for the love of limes, look intelligent if you can't act so!"

Ten minutes later the awkward squads were called to the bench and Myron went to work on Squad D or E, he didn't know which it was, and trotted around the field behind a shrill-voiced quarterback, practising a handful of elementary plays that he already knew by heart. He wondered how long it would be before some one in authority discovered that they were wasting the time of a first-class half-back!

CHAPTER VIII

JOE TALKS SENSE

Parkinson played Mapleton the first Saturday after the opening of school and had no difficulty in scoring as she pleased, confining herself mainly to old-style line-bucking attack. Mapleton was not, however, a strong opponent, and the final score of 18 to 0 was not particularly complimentary to the home team. There was much ragged playing on both sides, for neither team had had more than a week of preparation. Parkinson started with four of last year's players in the line and two behind it. The substitutes, of whom many were used before the contest was over, were not notably brilliant, with the possible exception of a lad named Keene, who went in as left end in the final five minutes, and of Joe Dobbins who played a steady game at right tackle for the entire fourth period. Myron, watching from the bench with half a hundred others, viewed Joe's success with mingled emotions. He was rather surprised at Joe's skill, but he was not a little

disgruntled at the ease with which that raw youth had attained his success. Here was he, Myron, still kicking his heels with the fourth or fifth squad, while Joe, who played no better and knew no more football, was already chosen as possible school team material. Myron secretly thought it a "raw deal." He had become fairly reconciled to remaining at Parkinson, but this afternoon he again began to suspect that his talents and merits were not to receive the consideration they deserved and to wish that he had been able to go elsewhere. They had worked him off on the kindergarten class as instructor two afternoons and he had received no thanks for his labours. Aside from that, he had received no sort of recognition. He might just as well be one of the raw recruits! He suspected that it might pay him to push himself forward a little: he believed that Joe had done that. But then Joe was just the sort of chap who would see nothing out of the way in self-advertisement. Although Myron held a very good opinion of himself as a football player he considered it beneath his dignity to beg for favours. If Coach Driscoll couldn't discover talent for himself then he could do without it. "I'll give them another week or so," decided Myron, "and then if they haven't given me a show I'll quit."

He was rather chilly toward Joe that evening.

The Latin was progressing well. Merriman saw that it did. He arrived like clockwork every evening save Sunday at exactly ten minutes past seven, spread his books and papers without the loss of a minute and had no breath for extraneous matters. "Good evening" was the extent of his small-talk. After that it was business with him. When, on the occasion of his first appearance in 17 Sohmer, Myron asked him how the puppies were getting along, Merriman frowned and said: "You aren't paying me to talk puppies, Foster. Have you found the page?" Having finished the two-hour session, Merriman dropped his books into a green-cloth bag, took up his hat, said "Good-night, Foster," and went. That, at least, was the usual procedure, but this Saturday night he varied it. When he had pulled the string of that green bag close he laid it beside his hat and asked: "Doing anything?"

"Doing—oh, no, not a thing," answered Myron.

"Then I'll stick around a few minutes." Merriman pulled a chair toward him and settled his feet on it and sighed luxuriously. "I suppose you saw the game this afternoon. You told me you were out for the team, didn't you?"

"Yes." Myron's voice may have sounded disgruntled, for Merriman smiled faintly and asked:

"What's the matter? Working you too hard?"

"No, they aren't working me at all," replied Myron bitterly. "I mean, all I'm doing is going through a lot of stunts I learned two years ago. I guess things are sort of balled up this year. They've got so many candidates out there that they can't begin to handle them all, and I dare say I'll be just where I am in November—if I stay."

"Cheer up," said the other. "They'll let you go before that."

"But, hang it, Merriman, I've played the game for two years: more than that, counting when I was a kid: and I was captain of my team last year. That may not mean much to these fellows here, but at least it ought to secure me a chance to show what I can do."

"Seems so. Doesn't it? I mean, aren't you getting a chance?"

"No, I'm not," answered Myron warmly. "I'm fuddling around with about fifteen or sixteen other fellows, most of whom never saw a football until a week ago, and getting nowhere. No one pays any attention to you here. They just say 'Report to Jones or Smith or some one' and forget all about you."

"Hm. Why not tell Driscoll you want a real try-out?"

"Why can't he see that I deserve one? It isn't my place to select his players for him!"

"N-no, but if there are so many candidates that he's likely to overlook you——"

Merriman was interrupted by the entrance of Joe Dobbins. It was well after nine and Joe thought he was privileged to return home. Finding Merriman still there, however, he hesitated at the door. "Hello! I thought you were through, Foster. I'll beat it."

"We are through," said Merriman. "I'm going myself in a minute."

"Oh, all right. Don't let me scare you away, though."

Myron performed the introduction and the two boys shook hands.

"Glad to know you," said Joe heartily. "Any guy who knows enough Latin to teach it to others can have my vote every time!"

Myron frowned. He wished that Joe wouldn't talk so much like a rowdy, and he glanced at Merriman to see how that youth had taken his room-mate's breeziness. Apparently Merriman was neither pained nor surprised. Instead, he was regarding Joe with smiling interest. "Thanks," he said, "but being able to teach Latin to others doesn't amount to much, Dobbins. When the other fellow knows a little less about any subject than you do you can trust a lot to bluff."

"Ain't that the truth?" exclaimed Joe, flinging himself into a chair. "Look at Foster there. He's been teaching a lot of poor dubs how to catch a football, and I dare say they think he invented the game!" He winked at the visitor and grinned at Myron. The latter, however, was not feeling kindly enough toward Joe to take the joke gracefully. He flushed and scowled.

"I dare say I know as much football as some fellows who played this afternoon," he said huffily.

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"Right you are, kiddo! But that isn't saying a whole lot. Some of those guys were pretty green, I thought. Did you see the game?" He looked at Merriman and the latter shook his head.

"No, I would have liked to, for, although I never played, I'm a regular football fan. But I don't have much time for the games. I take it that you played today."

"Me? A little. They put me in for the last quarter. Guess they didn't have any one else."

"Where do you play?" asked Merriman.

"Tackle, guard, anywhere around there. It's a great game, football. I'd rather play it than—than study Latin! Say, you're the guy that has the puppies, aren't you? Foster was telling me. I'd like to see 'em. I'm crazy about dogs."

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"Come around some day," replied Merriman cordially. "You'll find me in usually between nine and ten and one and two."

"I'll just do that little thing," Joe agreed. "Gee, if I had a place to keep one of 'em I'd fall for it. Maybe if I find a room outside I'll buy one off you."

"Glad to sell you one, Dobbins. I've got five that I don't need. Well, I must be getting back. By the way, I'm home all the morning tomorrow. If you like to drop around I'll be glad to show you my children."

"It's a go," said Joe heartily. "Have 'em all dressed up for company, eh? I'll be there."

"Nice guy," observed Joe when Merriman had taken his departure. "I sure do like a fellow that looks cheerful. Ever notice how many of the chaps here look like they'd just eaten a sour pickle, Foster? It doesn't cost a cent more to look cheerful, either."

"Your idea of looking cheerful is to grin like a codfish all the time," growled Myron. "I'd rather look the other way."

"Huh! Ever have a good look at a codfish, kiddo? He looks as sour as—as you do this minute! Has his mouth all drawn down, you know. Maybe he's a real merry sort of a guy when he's in the water, but he sure doesn't look that way when he's out of it!"

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"Never mind how I look," said Myron sharply. "And cut out that 'kiddo.' I've spoken about that often enough."

"Oh, all right. My error." Joe winked gravely at the lamp. After a moment he asked: "When's that furniture of yours coming?"

"I don't know. It should have been here before this. Why?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering. I was looking at a room on Union Street this afternoon. A fellow's got it now, but the dame says he's going to move out next week. I'd have to furnish it myself, of course. I suppose furniture costs a good bit, eh?"

"Some of it," answered Myron.

"Maybe I could get some second-hand things, though. I wouldn't need much. The trouble with the dive is that it has only one window and that looks out on a back yard full of washing. There's something sort of—of dejecting about a lot of clothes on a line. Don't know why, either. How'd you like the game?"

"All right, I guess."

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"How did I do?"

"You know as well as I, don't you? I wasn't watching you particularly."

"That's funny," chuckled Joe. "I thought every one was watching me hard. Anyway, the guy I played opposite was! That was an easy bunch, though. Their backs weren't on the job at all. Maybe I wouldn't rip them up if I was their coach! They say next Saturday's game will be a real one, though. Hope they let me in again. How are you coming on, by the way?"

"I'm not coming on," said Myron. "I'm getting a bit sick of it, and if they think I'm going to stand much more of their silly nonsense they're mistaken. I'm all right to coach a lot of greenies, it seems, but after that I can whistle. I wouldn't mind if I couldn't play as well as half the fellows that were in the game today."

"I guess your time's coming," said Joe consolingly. "They'll be weeding them out next week, and when they've got rid of about forty of them they'll be able to see what's left."

"If they don't hurry I won't be one of those left," said Myron grumpily, "and that's flat. I wish I'd stuck to my first scheme and gone to Kenwood. There are fewer fellows there and maybe a chap might have a chance to get somewhere."

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Joe shook his head disapprovingly. "I'm glad you didn't do that," he said. "Sort of sounds like treason or something. Say, how'd you happen to change your mind, anyway? Old man kick at it?"

Myron had not gone into particulars regarding his decision to remain at Parkinson but had told Joe that "he guessed he'd try to stick it out." If Joe had surmised the real reason for the overnight change of heart he had kept the fact to himself. Now Myron hesitated. He didn't want the real reason known nor did he want to tell Joe a lie. So he answered: "There wasn't any kick, but as you spoke of going to the village I thought—that is—my father thought—"

"Oh, he knew about that, eh?"

"Who? About what?"

"Your father: about me thinking of getting a room outside."

"Not exactly, only he thought I might get a place to myself later."

"You're a punk liar, Foster," laughed Joe. "The old man put your little scheme on the blink when he telegraphed to you. Now didn't he?"

"About that," confessed Myron a bit sheepishly.

"Sure! I knew it all the time. And he was dead right, too. I'm going to talk sense to you, Foster, whether you get sore or not. The trouble with you is that folks have made you think you're something a little bit better than the common run of fellows. You've always had everything you've wanted and you've been kept pretty close to the old million dollar hut, and I guess when you were a youngster you didn't have many fellows to play around with because your folks thought they might be sort of rough and teach you to throw snowballs and wrestle and all those vulgar things. And you're the only kid, too, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Myron loftily, "but if you'll kindly mind your own business——"

"Shan't," said Joe unruffledly. "You listen a minute. What I'm telling you's for your own good, just like everything nasty. Being an only kid with rich parents and servants to tuck your napkin around your neck and everything is mighty hard on a fellow. It—it mighty near ruins him, Foster! You aren't exactly a ruin—yet, but you're sure headed that way. Why, doggone you, why ain't I good enough to room with? What you got that counts that I ain't got! Same number of arms and legs, eh? Wear about the same size hat, don't we? Some fellows would have punched your head if you'd lorded it over 'em the way you did over me that first day. Why——"

"You try it!" said Myron wrathfully.

"Well, you look like a fair scrapper, but I don't believe you ever had a good fight in your life. Anyway, that's not the question. What I want to know is where you got your license to act like you're better than the next guy. Money don't make you that way, nor classy clothes, nor knowing how to get into a limousine without falling over your feet. Hang it, Foster, you'd be all right if you'd just forget that your old man owns a ship-yard and get it into your bean that other fellows are human even if they wear hand-me-downs and would try to shake hands with the butler! Think it over, old horse, and see if I ain't right."

"I don't have to think it over. You 'ain't' right." Myron laughed contemptuously. "You think——"

"Yeah, I'm likely to say 'ain't' when I get excited," replied Joe, "but I'll get over that in time."

"You think that just because I wear decent clothes I'm stuck-up," protested Myron hotly. "I've never said or pretended that I am better than—than any one else! As for rooming with you, I explained that. I was to have a room to myself. That was understood."

"All right," said Joe soothingly. "But when you found you couldn't be by yourself why didn't you face it like a sport! And why turn up your nose as if they'd asked you to bunk in with the Wild Man of Borneo?"

"I'd just as lief," sputtered Myron. "He wouldn't be any wilder than you are!"

"Yeah, but wait till you see me in those new duds we ordered," said Joe pleasantly. "Maybe you'll be real proud of me then. Wouldn't wonder if you'd almost speak to me when there's other fellows looking!"

Myron flushed and his eyes fell. "That's a rotten thing to say, Dobbins," he muttered.

"True, though, ain't—isn't it?"

"No, it isn't!"

"My mistake then. Sorry. Well, I'm for the old bed. I suppose I might have kept my mouth shut and minded my own business, like you said, but that mess of talk's been sort of accumulating ever since we came together and I feel better for getting rid of it, whether you do or not! Sorry if I said anything to hurt your feelings, Foster."

"Don't worry. You didn't. What you say doesn't cut any ice with me."

"Then there's no harm done, eh? Nor good either. It may make you happier to know that I've decided to take that room I told you about, though. The guy that's in it now moves out next Friday and faculty's given me leave to change. That ought to give you sweet dreams, eh?"

"It will," replied Myron acidly.

CHAPTER IX

MYRON LOSES HIS TEMPER

The next morning Joe was as cheerful and smiling and good-natured as ever, but Myron wasn't yet ready to forget, and his responses to his room-mate's overtures were brief and chilling. After breakfast, which on Sundays was a half-hour later, Joe suggested that Myron walk over to the village with him and visit Merriman and see the puppies. Myron wanted to go, for the day was chill and cloudy and generally depressing, but his pride wouldn't let him and so he answered

shortly that he had seen the puppies and he guessed they hadn't changed much. When Joe had taken himself off Myron felt horribly out-of-sorts and was heartily glad when church time came and, immaculately but soberly attired, he could set forth across the campus. Dinner was at one o'clock, a more hearty repast than most of the fellows needed after a morning spent in comparative idleness. However, no one skimped it. Myron went right through from soup to ice-cream, becoming more and more heavy and gloomy under the effects of an overloaded stomach. He had been placed at a table near the serving-room doors, and, while some of his companions declared that you got your things quicker and hotter by being so close to the source of supplies, Myron disliked having the doors flap back and forth directly behind his back and detested the bursts of noise and aroma that issued forth at such times. Today he resented those annoyances more than ever and found the conversation about him more than ordinarily puerile.

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There were a good many third class boys at his table, fellows of fourteen and fifteen, whose deportment was anything but staid. They were much given to playing practical jokes on each other, such as surreptitiously salting a neighbour's milk or sprinkling pepper in his napkin. And they were not above flicking pellets of bread when the nearest faculty member was not looking. Each table had a "Head" whose duty it was to see that proper decorum was observed. In some cases the Head was one of the faculty, in other cases he was an older boy. The Head at Myron's table was a second class chap named Rogers, a stoutish, easy-going fellow who was generally so busy eating everything he could lay hands to that he had no time for correcting his charges. It was unfortunate that young Tinkham, the pink-cheeked, sandy-haired little cherub who sat almost opposite Myron, should have selected today for his experiment with the bread pellet. Tinkham had longed for days to see if he could lodge a pellet against Myron's nose. To Tinkham that nose looked supercilious and contemptuous and seemed to fairly challenge assault. Until now Tinkham had never been able to summon sufficient courage to dare the sacrilege, but today there was a demoralising atmosphere about and so when, having eaten his ice-cream and having nothing further to live for anyway, he saw Myron's gaze wander toward the further end of the hall Tinkham drew ammunition from under the edge of his butter dish and with an accuracy born of long practice let fly. His aim proved perfect. Myron dropped his spoon and sped a hand to his outraged nose. Before him, perched on the remains of his ice-cream, was the incriminating missile, and of all those who had witnessed the deed only one remained unsmiling, demure and innocent, and that one was the cherubic, fair-haired Tinkham.

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Myron lost his temper instantly and completely. "That was you, Tinkham! I saw you!" The latter statement was hardly truthful, but Tinkham didn't challenge it. He only looked surprised and pained. "You try that again and I'll box your silly little ears for you! Remember that, too!" Myron flicked the bread pellet disgustedly aside and glowered at the offender.

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"Boo!" said one of Tinkham's friends, and the younger element became convulsed with laughter. At that, Rogers, who had been bending absorbedly over his dessert, looked up.

"Cut that out, fellows," he remonstrated feebly.

"We're only laughing," giggled one of the boys.

"Wake up, Sam," said Eldredge, who was Rogers' age and had viewed the proceedings with unconcealed amusement. "You're missing all the fun. If you didn't eat so much——"

"If he didn't eat so much he might keep order at the table," said Myron.

Rogers was too surprised to reply, but Eldredge took up the cudgels in his behalf. "Oh, don't be a grouch, Foster," he sneered. "The kid didn't hurt you. It was only fun."

"I don't like the kind, then," answered Myron haughtily. "After this he can leave me out of his 'fun.'"

"Oh, piffle! Come back to earth! If I'd been Tinkham I'd have shied the whole loaf at you. Then you'd have had something to kick about."

"The something would have been you, then," retorted Myron.

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"Would it? Is that so?" Eldredge glared angrily across the table. "Think you're man enough to kick me, do you? Why, say——"

"Dry up, Paul!" begged Rogers. "Tasser's got his eye on you."

"I won't dry up," retorted the insulted Eldredge. Nevertheless he dropped his voice beyond the hearing of the neighbouring instructor. "If that stuck-up mollycoddle thinks he can talk about kicking me and get away with it he's all wrong, believe me!" The younger boys were listening in open delight and Tinkham was fairly squirming with excitement. "Get that, Foster?"

"I heard you," replied Myron indifferently.

"You did, eh? Well, any time you feel like——"

"Rogers, what's wrong at your table?" It was Mr. Tasser's voice, and Eldredge stopped suddenly and gulped back the rest of his remark.

"I—I—that is, nothing, sir," stammered the Head. Then, to Eldredge in an imploring whisper: "Shut up, will you?" he begged. "Want to get me in wrong?" Eldredge muttered and shot venomous looks at Myron while the youngsters sighed their disappointment. Myron folded his napkin and arose leisurely, aware of the unsympathetic regard of his companions, and walked out. In the corridor he waited for a minute or two. He had no desire to carry matters any further with Paul Eldredge, but he felt that if he hurried away that youth might misconstrue the action. However, Eldredge didn't appear and so Myron went across to Sohmer, still sore and irritated, to

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find an empty study. Eldredge's failure to follow Myron out of the dining hall had been due entirely to discretion. With Mr. Tasser's penetrant and suspicious gaze on him, he decided that it would be wise to avoid all seeming interest in Myron.

Joe failed to return to the room, and after trying to do some studying and finding that he simply couldn't keep his mind on his task, Myron pulled a cap on and sallied forth again. It was misting by then, and a chilling suggestion of autumn was in the air. When he had mooned along the country road that led toward Cumner for a mile or so without finding anything of interest he turned back toward the town. A hot chocolate in a corner drug store restored his spirits somewhat and, having no better place to go, he crossed the railroad and made his way through the dreary quarter that held the residence of Merriman. He didn't suppose Merriman would be in, but it was something to do. Recalling former instructions, he didn't bother to ring the bell this time, but opened the door and climbed the dark stairway to the second floor. That Merriman was in became known to him before he had groped his way to the room, for from beyond the closed portal came the sound of voices. For a moment Myron hesitated. He hadn't bargained on finding visitors there. But the loneliness of Number 17 Sohmer on this Sunday afternoon decided him, and he knocked. Merriman's voice bade him enter and he opened the door on a surprising scene.

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On the decrepit window-seat reclined Joe Dobbins. Close by, in the room's one armchair, with his feet on a second chair, was Merriman. Between the two was a corner of the deal table, dragged from its accustomed place, and on the table was the remains of a meal: some greasy plates, a coffee pot, cups, bits of bread, about a third of a pie, a half-eaten banana, a jar of milk. The room, in spite of a wide-open window, smelled of sausages. On Joe's chest reposed Tess, the terrier, evidently too full of food and contentment to bark, and in Merriman's lap was a squirming bunch of puppies.

"Come in, Foster," called the host genially. "Pardon me if I don't get up, but just now I am weighted with family cares. Find a chair and draw up to our cosy circle. Have you had food? There's some pie left, and I can heat some coffee for you in a second."

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"I've had dinner, thanks, a good while ago." He carefully lifted a dozen or so books from a chair and took it across to the window. He felt rather intrusive. And there was Joe grinning at him from the seat, and he was supposed to have a grouch against Joe.

"Well, have a piece of pie, won't you?" begged Merriman hospitably. "Sure? We were sort of late with our feed. What time is it, anyway? Great Scott, Dobbins, it's nearly four! How long have we been sitting here?"

"I've been here ever since I worried down that last piece of pie," said Joe, "and I guess that was about an hour and a half ago. You ought to have showed up earlier, Foster. You missed a swell feed!"

"Sausages and potatoes and pie," laughed Merriman. "Still, we managed to nearly kill ourselves: at least, I did." Joe groaned and shifted the terrier to a new position. "Been for a walk, Foster?"

"Yes. It's a rotten day, isn't it?"

"Is it?" Merriman glanced through the window in faint surprise. "I hadn't noticed. Sort of cloudy I see. By the way, I've sold one of these little beggars."

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"Have you? They've got their eyes open, haven't they?"

"Sort of half open," chuckled Merriman. "Maybe they're too fat to open them any wider. This is the one that's sold. His name is—what was it you named him, Dobbins?"

"Zephaniah," answered Joe gravely, "Zephaniah Q. Dobbins."

"What's the Q for?" laughed Merriman.

"Haven't decided yet. I just put that in for the sound. You see, Foster, I'm calling him Zephaniah after an old codger who used to live near us up at Hecker's Falls, Maine. Zephaniah Binney was his name. He used to be a cook in the logging camps, but he got so fat tasting the things he cooked that he had to quit. After that he used to sit in front of his shack all day, tilted back in a chair, and look for work."

"Look for work?" laughed Merriman.

"Yeah, he was always on the look-out for a job. 'Most strained his eyes looking. But somehow he never found one; leastways, he hadn't when I saw him last. Funny old codger. Warren Wilson, who was postmaster and ran the store and one thing and another, used to bring the Bangor paper to Zeph every day and Zeph would study the advertisements mighty carefully. Guess he knew more about the Bangor labour market than any man alive. 'I was readin' where one o' them big dry-goods houses is wantin' a sales manager,' Zeph would tell you. 'It don't say how much they're willin' to pay, though. If I knew that I'd certain'y communicate with 'em, I would so. Maybe they'll make mention o' the salary tomorrow. I'll just wait an' see.'"

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"And he's still waiting?" chuckled Merriman.

"As far as I know."

"What does he live on?" asked Myron. "Has he got money saved?"

"No, he's got something better; he's got an up-and-coming wife who works just as hard as Zeph—looks. She's a wonderful woman, too, Mrs. Binney is. She's lived with Zeph thirty years or more and she ain't—hasn't found him out yet. Or, if she has, she don't let on. If you ask her has Zeph

got a job yet she'll tell you, 'No, not yet, but he's considerin' acceptin' a position with a firm o' commission merchants down to Boston.' And all the considering Zeph has done is read an advertisement in the Bangor paper where it says the Boston folks want a few carloads of potatoes!"

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"It's sort of tough on the puppy, though," murmured Myron.

"Well, there's a strong resemblance between him and Zephaniah," said Joe. "I've been watching him. He doesn't push and shove for his food like the rest of them. He just waits, and first thing you know he's getting the best there is. If that ain't like Zeph I'll eat my hat."

"Where are you going to keep him?" inquired Myron.

"In my room—when I get it. He won't want any better than I have, I guess. I don't suppose he's going to kick because there isn't much of a view."

Merriman asked about the new quarters and Joe supplied a drily humorous description of them. The room began to grow dark and the boy's faces became only lighter blurs in the twilight. Tess went to sleep and snored loudly. Myron listened more than he talked, conscious of the comfortable, home-like atmosphere of the queer, illy-furnished room and putting off from minute to minute the return to school. But at last the town clock struck six and Joe lifted the terrier from his stomach, in spite of protests, and swung his feet to the floor.

"I've got to be going," he announced. "Haven't peeked into a book since Friday." He yawned cavernously. "You coming along, Foster?"

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"Yes, I guess so." Myron was glad to be asked, but he was careful to keep any trace of cordiality from his voice.

"Well, come again," said Merriman heartily. "Both of you. Sunday's an off-day with me and you'll usually find me in about noon."

"Me? I'll be back," declared Joe. "I haven't enjoyed a meal since I left home like I enjoyed that dinner. Brother, you sure can cook sausages!"

"I like that guy," said Joe when he and Myron were traversing the poorly-lighted street that led toward school. "He don't have any too easy a time of it, either, Foster."

"No, I guess coaching isn't much fun," Myron agreed.

"Well, he told me he liked it. Maybe he has to. He says he's put himself clean through school that way. His father and mother are both dead and the only kin he's got is an old aunt who lives out West somewhere. He says she's got a right smart lot of money, but the only thing she ever does for him is send him six handkerchiefs every Christmas. Says it's a big help, though, because he doesn't have to buy any. He's a cheerful guy, all right, and the fellows hit on a swell name for him."

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"What's that?" asked Myron.

"Why, his name is Andrew Merriman, you know, and so they call him 'Merry Andrew.' Cute, ain't it? He works hard every summer, too. Last summer he was a waiter at a hotel and did some tutoring besides. He's a hustler. Doggone it, Foster, you've got to hand it to a guy like that!"

"Yes," Myron agreed. Mentally he wondered that Merriman didn't choose a less menial task than waiting on table. It seemed rather demeaning, he thought. Joe was silent until they had reached the end of School Street and were entering the campus gate. Then:

"Say, I'd like to do something for him," he said earnestly. "Only I suppose he wouldn't let me."

"Do something? What do you mean?" asked Myron.

"Well, help him along somehow. Fix it so's he wouldn't have to work all the time like he does. The guy's got a great bean on him. Bet you he knows more than the Principal and the rest of the faculty put together. A fellow like that ought to be able to go ahead and—and develop himself. See what I mean? He's too—too valuable to waste his time serving soup and fish in a summer hotel. If I did it it wouldn't hurt none, but he's different. If I had my way I'd fix him up in a couple of nice rooms with plenty of books and things and tell him to go to it."

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"But I don't just see how you could do anything much for him," said Myron.

"No, I guess he wouldn't let me."

"Maybe not. Anyway, it would take a good deal of money, wouldn't it?"

"Yeah, I guess so. Well, I'm just talking. No harm in that, eh? I'm not going over to supper. I couldn't eat anything more if I was paid for it. See you later, kiddo."

For once Myron failed to resent that form of address. In fact, he scarcely noticed it. Going across to Alumni Hall, he found himself looking forward with something akin to dismay to the time when Dobbins should have left him to the undisputed possession of Number 17!

CHAPTER X

THE CHALLENGE

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Myron had quite forgotten Paul Eldredge and the incident of the bread pellet and only remembered when he seated himself at table and caught Eldredge's unfriendly stare. As he was late, Eldredge and the others were nearly through the rather modest repast, and smiles and whispers across the board appraised him of the unpleasant fact that he was suspected of having delayed his arrival in order to avoid encountering his table companions. Being far from the truth, this displeased him greatly and as a result he bore himself more haughtily than ever, thereby increasing the disfavour into which he had fallen at noon. Young Tinkham raised a snigger amongst his cronies by ostentatiously rolling a bit of biscuit into a pellet, but he didn't throw it. Presently Myron was left alone, to his satisfaction, Eldredge passing him with a challenging look that would have given him cause for thought had he seen it. At the moment, however, Myron was looking into the bottom of his cup and so had no forewarning of what was to occur.

If Eldredge was in the corridor when he came out ten minutes later Myron didn't see him. It was not until he was half-way along the walk toward Sohmer that he again recalled Eldredge's existence. Then he heard his name spoken and turned. Two fellows came toward him, the lights of Goss Hall behind them so that it was not until they had reached him that he recognised them as Eldredge and Rogers. It was Eldredge who had called and who now spoke. [111]

"Been looking for you ever since dinner, Foster," said Eldredge accusingly. "Kept sort of scarce, haven't you?"

Rogers laughed softly, nervously. Myron stiffened.

"You couldn't have looked very hard, Eldredge. I was in my room——"

"Oh, no you weren't!" interrupted Eldredge triumphantly. "I looked there."

"Until half-past three—or three."

"Or half-past two—or two," mocked the other.

"Well, what of it?" asked Myron coldly. He knew now that Eldredge intended trouble. "What did you want me for?"

"Oh, nothing much. I just wanted to give you something."

"I don't want it, thanks," replied Myron. He turned to go on, but Eldredge stepped in front of him. [112]

"Don't, eh? Wait till you know what it is, Mister Smug!" Eldredge's arm shot out. Although he had not guessed the other's intention, Myron caught sight of the movement and instinctively stepped back. The blow, aimed at his face, landed lightly on his chest. Prompted by a rage as sudden as Eldredge's attack, Myron's right hand swept swiftly up from his side and caught his opponent fairly on the side of the face with open palm. The sound of the slap and Eldredge's snarl of mingled surprise and pain came close together. Staggered by the blow, Eldredge fell back a pace. Then he sprang forward again.

"You—you——" he stammered wildly.

But Rogers, stout and unwieldy, threw himself between in a panic of entreaty. "Don't, Paul! Not here! Some one's coming! You'll get the very dickens! You crazy dub, will you quit? *Paul*——"

"No, I won't!" grunted Eldredge, trying to shove Rogers aside. "He can't hit me and get away with it! I'll show him——"

"Let him alone," said Myron.

"No! Aw, quit, Paul! Honest, some one's coming down the line. It won't hurt you to wait a minute, will it?" Rogers was panting now from the double exertion of being a human barrier and a suppliant. But he won, for Eldredge, almost as angry with his friend for delaying revenge as with his enemy, but utterly unable to get past him, stopped his efforts in despair. [113]

"What do you mean, wait a minute?" he demanded, alternately glaring at Rogers and Myron.

"Well, wait until tomorrow," panted Rogers. "You know what'll happen if you fight here. Do it regular, Paul."

"Tomorrow! Where'll he be by that time?" asked Eldredge scathingly.

"Shut up!" cautioned Rogers hoarsely. "You'll have a crowd here in a minute!" Already a group of three fellows had paused a little way off and were peering curiously through the darkness. "Listen, will you? You fellows can settle this just as well tomorrow as you can now. Fix it up for the brickyard at—at what time do you say, Foster?"

"Any time he likes!" answered Myron obligingly. Then, remembering that there were such things as recitations, he added: "Before breakfast: say a quarter to seven."

"You won't want any breakfast when I get through with you," growled Eldredge.

"That all right for you, Paul?" asked Rogers. By this time he was leading the others by force of example along the walk. [114]

"Sure."

"Good! A quarter to seven, then, at the brickyard. Come on, Paul. So long, Foster!"

Myron made no answer as he strode on toward Sohmer. His pulses were still pounding, although he had managed to control his voice fairly well, and he was experiencing a sort of breathlessness that was novel and not altogether unpleasant. But, to be truthful, contemplation

of tomorrow morning's engagement with Eldredge at the brickyard, wherever that might be, did not fill him with unalloyed bliss. In fact, as excitement dwindled something very much like nervousness took its place. Myron was not a coward, but, as he climbed the stairs in Sohmer, he found himself wishing that he had kept his temper and his tongue under control yesterday noon!

Joe Dobbins, with both lean, sinewy hands desperately clutching his tousled hair, was bent over a book at the study table. Joe's method of studying was almost spectacular. First he removed his coat, then his collar and tie. After that he seated himself on the edge of his chair, twined his ankles about the legs of it, tilted it forward until his elbows were on the table, got a fine, firm grip on his hair with each hand, took a long agonised breath—and plunged in! Studying was just as hard for him as it looked, and it is greatly to his credit that he succeeded at it as well as he did. Just now he looked up at Myron's entrance. For a moment he stared vacantly. Then his hands dropped from his head, the chair thumped back into normal position and he came out of his trance.

"Hello," he said vaguely.

"Latin?" asked Myron.

"Math," was the sad response. Then, sensing something unusual about his room-mate, he asked: "What's up?"

"Nothing. Why?"

"You look like some one had dropped a firecracker down your neck, or something. What's disturbed your wonted calm? Say, how's that? 'Wonted calm!' Gee, that's going some, ain't it? I mean, is it not?"

"Great," said Myron absently. He went into the bedroom and methodically changed coat and vest for a grey house jacket. When he emerged Joe was still unsatisfied.

"Going to study?" asked the latter.

"Yes—no—I don't know. I ought to." But Myron seated himself at the window instead of at the table and took one leg into his interlaced hands. Joe watched him solicitously. After a minute Myron asked with elaborate unconcern: "Did you ever fight any one, Dobbins?"

"Me?" Joe chuckled. "Well, I've been in a couple of scraps in my time. Why?"

"Just wondered. What—how do you go at it?"

"Me?" Joe leaned precariously back in his chair. "Well, I ain't got but one rule, Foster, and that's: Hit 'em first and often."

"Oh! I—I suppose boxing is—quite an art."

"Don't know much about boxing, kiddo. Where I come from they don't go in for rules and regulations. When you fight—you fight: and about the only thing that's barred is kicking the other fellow in the head when he's down! A real earnest scrap between a couple of lumber-jacks is about the nearest thing to battle, murder and sudden death that you're likely to see outside the movies!"

"I didn't mean that sort of fighting," said Myron distastefully. "Fellows at—well, say, at school don't fight like that, of course."

"No, I don't suppose so. I guess they stick to their fists. Anyway, they did where I went to school. We used to have some lively little scraps, too," added Joe with a reminiscent chuckle. "I remember—But, say, what's your trouble, Foster? Why are you so interested in fighting?"

"Oh, I was just wondering," answered Myron evasively.

"Yeah, I know all about that. Who you been fighting?"

"No one."

"Who you going to fight?"

"I haven't said I was going to fight, have I? I was just asking about it. Maybe I might have to fight some time, and—"

"Sure, that's so. You might. You can't ever tell, can you?" Joe picked up a pencil and beat a thoughtful tattoo on the blotter for a moment. Then: "Who is he? Do I know him?" he asked.

"Know who?" faltered Myron.

"This guy that's after you. Come on, kiddo, open up! Come across! Let's hear the story."

So finally Myron told the whole thing, secretly very glad to do it, and Joe listened silently, save for an occasional grunt. When Myron had finished Joe asked: "So that's it, eh? Tomorrow morning at a quarter to seven at the brickyard. Where's this brickyard located?"

"I don't know. I must ask some one."

"Yeah. Now tell me this, kid—I mean Foster: What do you know about fighting?"

"Not much," owned Myron ruefully. "I saw a couple of fellows at high school fight once, but that's about all."

"Never fought yourself?"

Myron shook his head almost apologetically. "No, I never had occasion to."

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Joe snorted. "You mean you never had a chance to find an occasion," he said derisively. "You were kept tied up to the grand piano in the drawing-room, I guess. Think of a husky guy like you getting to be seventeen years old and never having any fun at all! Gee, it's criminal! Your folks have got a lot to answer for, Foster, believe me! Here, stand up here and put your fists up and show me what you know—or don't know."

Myron obeyed and faced the other awkwardly. Joe groaned.

"Gee, ain't you the poor fish? Stick that foot out so you can move about. That's it. Now I'm going to tap you on the shoulder, the left shoulder. Don't let me!" But Myron did let him, although he thrashed both his arms about fearsomely. "Rotten! Watch me, not my hands. Now look out for your face!"

A minute later Joe dropped his hands, shook his head and leaned dejectedly against a corner of the table. "It's no use, kiddo, it's no use! You'll be the lamb going to the slaughter tomorrow. Ain't any one ever taken the least interest in your education? What are you going to do when that Eldredge guy comes at you?" [119]

Myron smiled wanly. "I guess I'll just have to do the best I can," he said. "Maybe he isn't much better than I am."

"Don't kid yourself. When a guy picks a quarrel the way he did it means he knows a bit. Still, at that——" Joe stopped and stared thoughtfully at the wall. Then: "What's his full name?" he asked.

"Paul Eldredge is all I know of it."

"That'll do. I'll be back in a few minutes." Joe picked up his cap and made for the door. "Nothing like knowing what you're up against," he said. "Sit tight, Brother, and leave this to me. If I was you I'd do a bit of studying, eh?"

Myron followed the advice. Just at first it was hard to get his mind on lessons, for his thoughts kept recurring to the coming encounter and when they did he squirmed uneasily in his chair and felt a kind of tingling sensation at the end of his spine. On the football field Myron had often taken blows and given them in the excitement of the game. He had had some hard knocks and had seen plenty of rough playing. He couldn't remember ever having been afraid of an opponent, although he had more than once entered a contest with the knowledge that the enemy was "laying for him." But, somehow, this was different. What resentment he had felt against Paul Eldredge had passed, and so even the spur of anger was lacking. He would have to stand up there tomorrow morning and be knocked around at Eldredge's pleasure, it seemed, for no very good reason that he could think of. It was rather silly, when you came to consider it calmly. Eldredge had been rude to him, he had been rude to Eldredge, Eldredge had struck him, he had struck Eldredge. Now when things were nicely evened up he must take a licking! Well, he supposed there was no way out of it short of acting like a coward. He would have to take what was coming to him, getting off as easily as he could, and try to like it! Well, he had taken punishment before and could again. Having reached that conclusion, he managed to get his thoughts back to his studies and was going very well when Joe returned. [120]

CHAPTER XI

MYRON MISSES AN ENGAGEMENT

"Well, I've got his number," announced Joe, discarding his cap and dropping into a chair. "He's a scrapper. He's had three or four mix-ups since he has been here, usually, as near as I can make out, with fellows who didn't know much fighting. He's got a quick temper and is ugly when he's started. He's a second class fellow and plays hockey and baseball. Had a fuss with the baseball coach last spring and was laid off for awhile. Apologised and got back again finally. I didn't hear any one say he was liked much. The main thing, though, is that he can scrap. Keith says he's quite a foxy youth with his fists; says he thinks he's taken lessons. So now we know where we are, eh?" [121]

"Yes, it seems so," answered Myron. "Well, there's no use talking about it, is there? Did you find out where this brickyard is?"

"Yeah, it's just across the street at the far side of the campus, back from the road a bit. I've been thinking, Foster. There's no sense in you going up against a fellow who knows how to fight, is there?" [122]

"No, but it doesn't seem to be a question of sense," replied Myron, smiling.

"What I mean is, it isn't a fair proposition for a chap who can't even keep his guard up to try to fight a guy who knows all the ropes. Might as well expect one of Merriman's puppies to fight a bull-dog. That's so, ain't it?"

"Well, it isn't quite that bad," said Myron. "At least, I hope not!"

"Mighty near. So here's my plan, kiddo. You stay right in your downy couch tomorrow morning and I'll see this guy Eldredge myself."

"What?"

"Sure! Why not? He wants a scrap, don't he? Well, he wouldn't get any if you were to go. It wouldn't be worth his trouble getting out of bed. But me, I can show him a real good time, likely. I don't say I can lick him, for they tell me he's a right shifty guy and has some punch, but I can keep him interested until he's ready to call it a day. Besides, I ain't had a real good scrap since last winter and I'm getting soft. So that's what we'll do, eh?"

Myron laughed. Then, perplexedly, he asked: "You aren't in earnest, Dobbins?"

"Sure, I'm in earnest? What's the joke?"

"I guess it would be on Eldredge," chuckled Myron.

"That's so." Joe smiled too. "He will be a bit surprised, won't he? Maybe he will be peeved, too. I wouldn't wonder. Well, that's nothing in our young lives, eh? We're doing the best we can for him."

"But—but do you really think I'd agree to that?" asked Myron. "You're joking, of course!"

"What do you mean, joking?" demanded the other indignantly. "And why wouldn't you agree? Ain't it the sensible thing to do?"

"Maybe, but I can't do it, of course, Dobbins. You must see that. Why, hang it, if I challenge another fellow to fight I don't expect him to send a substitute!"

"What you expect don't cut any ice, kiddo. If the guy you challenge can't fight a little bit he's a plain idiot to let you whang him around, ain't he? And if he knows another guy who doesn't mind taking his place why ain't it all right and fair for him to send him along? Tell me those!"

"Why, because—because it isn't!" answered Myron impatiently. "Eldredge hasn't anything against you. His quarrel is with me. What would he say about me if I stayed away and let you go instead?"

"Him? What could he say? I'll tell him you're no scrapper. That'll fix that in his mind, won't it? Mind you, Foster, I ain't saying he's going to be pleased at running up against a guy who knows a thing or two about the game, but it don't seem to me that we need to worry about whether he's pleased or not. He wants a scrap and we're giving him one. That's enough, ain't it?"

"It's the craziest thing I ever heard of," said Myron. "Of course, I'm awfully much obliged, Dobbins. I appreciate it, honest. I don't know why you should offer to do it, either. But it's absolutely out of the question. So let's not talk about it any more."

Joe frowned, opened his mouth, closed it again without speaking and fell to studying his hands. After a moment Myron asked: "What do I do when I get there, Dobbins? Do we shake hands or— or just start in?"

"Start in," answered the other absently. "Look here, Foster," he continued earnestly, "you're going to act like a plumb fool. Why, that guy'll paste you all over your face and leave you looking like a raw beefsteak! Then faculty'll want to know what you've been doing and there'll be all sorts of trouble on tap. What you going to do when he begins lamming you?"

Myron shrugged. "Stand him off the best way I can. Lamm him back if I can. Maybe I'll get on to the game after awhile. I'm going to try. I thought maybe you could show me a few things tonight, just so's I wouldn't look too green tomorrow. It isn't late, is it?"

"No, it isn't late." Joe brightened perceptibly for an instant, but then his face fell again and he shook his head. "It wouldn't be any use, kiddo. You'd forget it all in the morning. I guess if you won't do like I said the best thing'll be to let him knock you down as soon as possible. When you're down, stay down. If he asks have you had enough, you tell him yes. Then you can shake hands and get through without getting all beat up."

"Is that what you'd do?" asked Myron sharply.

"Me? Well, I—I don't know as I would, just."

"Then why should you think I'd do it? Who told you I was a coward? I can't fight, and I know it, but I don't intend to lie down!"

"Whoa, Bill! I ain't said you were a coward. I know better, of course. If you were a coward you'd try to squirm out of meeting the fellow, wouldn't you? All right, have it your own way, kiddo. Only don't worry about it, see? You get a good sleep and leave tomorrow look after itself."

"Thanks. I'm going to do that, Dobbins. Guess I'll turn in now and dream I'm Jess Willard or one of those guys—fellows. Are you going to study some more?"

Joe nodded. "Yeah, I'm going to study some. Good night."

"Good night," answered Myron. A few minutes later he spoke again from the bedroom. "I say, Dobbins!"

"Yeah?"

"I'm awfully much obliged. You've been mighty kind, you know."

"That's all right, kiddo," growled Dobbins. "Go to sleep."

Whether Myron dreamed that he was a prizefighter, or dreamed at all, he didn't remember when he awoke. That he had slept restfully, however, he realised the instant he was in possession of his faculties. He told himself that he felt fine. And when, a second later, he remembered the engagement at the brickyard the empty feeling at the pit of his stomach lasted but a moment. He

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turned his head and glanced at the clock on top of his dresser. Then he stared at it. It said twenty-eight minutes after six! It wasn't like that clock to go wrong. It had been all right last evening when he had wound it, too. Suppose it was still right! Suppose he had overslept! He looked quickly at Joe's bed. It was empty. Great Scott! He'd have to hurry if he was to get to that brickyard in seventeen minutes! He started to throw the covers aside, but he didn't. He couldn't! He couldn't move his arm! Why, he couldn't move any part of him except his head! Something awful had happened to him! Fright gripped him and in a panic he strove to get command of his limbs. Horrible thoughts of paralysis came to him. The bed creaked, but he remained flat on his back! And then it dawned on him that the reason he couldn't move was because he was tied down!

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For a moment he was so relieved to discover that the fault was not with him that he didn't realise his situation. It was only when he remembered the time again that he understood. This was Joe Dobbins' doing! Joe had tied him down to his bed, though how he had done it without awakening him Myron couldn't imagine, and had himself gone to meet Eldredge! Surprise gave way to anger and mortification. What would Eldredge think of him? All Joe's explanations would fail to convince Eldredge that Myron had not purposely stayed away. Of all the crazy, meddling fools in the world, Dobbins was the craziest! Wait until he found him! Wait until he told him what he thought of him! Wait—

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But just then Myron realised that waiting was the one thing he couldn't afford. The clock had ticked off two minutes of the precious time remaining to him and the long hand was moving past the half-hour already. He studied his predicament. Joe had, it appeared, used his own sheets and quilt and, probably, other things as well, and Myron was as securely fastened down as Gulliver by the Lilliputians! He could move each leg about an inch and each arm the same. By arching his back he could lift his body just off the bed: something, possibly a sheet, crossed his chest and was tied fast to the side rails. He squirmed until he was exhausted, and the only apparent result was to give himself the fraction of an inch more freedom. He subsided, panting, and his anger found room for grudging admiration of Joe's work. How that idiot had managed to swathe and bind him as he had done without waking him up was both a marvel and a mystery!

"Gee," muttered Myron, "I knew I was a sound sleeper, but—"

Words failed him. Presently, despairing of success, he tried to free his right hand. Something that felt like a strap—he discovered afterwards that it was one of his neckties—was wound about the wrist, and his efforts were of no avail. The other hand was quite as securely tied. Tugging his feet against similar bonds was equally unprofitable. When the hands of the clock on the dresser indicated seventeen minutes to seven he gave up and tried to find consolation in arranging the eloquent remarks he meant to deliver to Joe Dobbins when that offensive youth returned.

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Meanwhile, history was in the making on the trampled field of battle.

At a few minutes before the half-hour after six, a large, wide-shouldered youth attired in a pair of old trousers, a faded brown sweater that lacked part of one sleeve and a cloth cap of a violent green-and-brown plaid might have been seen ambling leisurely across the campus in the direction of the West Gate. In fact, he was seen, for from an open window on the front of Leonard Hall a pyjama-clad boy thrust his head forth and hailed softly.

"Hi, Joe! Joe Dobbins!" he called.

Joe paused and searched the front of the building until a spot of pale lavender against the expanse of sunlit brick supplied the clue. Then: "Hello, Keith," he answered. "Can't you sleep?"

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Leighton Keith chuckled. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"Just for a stroll," replied Joe carelessly.

"Wait a minute and I'll come along."

Joe shook his head. "Got a date, Keith, with a guy named Eldredge."

Keith nodded and waved, but, after Joe had passed from sight around the corner of the building, he pursed his lips thoughtfully and stared out into the early morning world. Gradually a smile curved his mouth. "Paul Eldredge," he murmured. "Guess we'll look into this." He donned a dressing-gown and passed into the corridor and along it until he reached a window that overlooked Linden Street. Joe was just sauntering through the gate, hands in pockets, nonchalance expressed in every motion. But Keith noted with satisfaction that he turned to the right into Apple Street and presently crossed that thoroughfare and disappeared into the lane that led toward the abandoned brickyard. Keith whistled expressively if subduedly and went quickly back to his room and aroused Harry Cater by the simple method of pulling the clothes from him. "Katie," as he was called, groaned, clutched ineffectually for the bedding and opened one eye.

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"Wake up, Katie," said Keith. "Joe Dobbins has a scrap on with Eldredge at the brickyard. Come on!"

"Howjuno?" muttered Katie.

"He just told me." That was near enough the truth, Keith considered. Katie opened the other eye, stared around the room and slung one foot over the edge of the bed. "All right," he said briskly. "Wait till I get a shower and I'll be with you."

"Shower? Nothing doing!" Keith was piling rapidly into his clothes. "There isn't time. This is something a little bit choice, old man, and we don't want to miss it. Get a move on!"

CHAPTER XII

ELDREDGE REJECTS A SUBSTITUTE

Joe made his leisurely way along the lane, his feet rustling the leaves that littered the grassy path. There had been a frost during the night and in shaded places it still glistened. When he had left the lane and was making his way between the old tumbledown shed with its piles of crumbling bricks and one of the clay pits he saw that there was a skim of ice on the water below him. It was a morning that induced a fine feeling of well-being, that made the blood course quickly and would have put a song on Joe's lips had he been able to sing a note. As it was, he whistled instead.

Ahead of him was a smallish shed, perhaps at one time the office. Some rusted barrows and pieces of machinery lay about it. As it presented the only place of concealment in sight, Joe concluded that it was the place of appointment. Eldredge, however, had not arrived. Joe made sure of that by looking on all sides of the building and peering into the interior through a paneless window. So he seated himself in the sunlight and philosophically waited.

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Some ten minutes passed and then he heard footsteps and presently around the corner appeared Paul Eldredge and Sam Rogers. Joe frowned. Eldredge shouldn't have brought a second fellow without telling Myron of his intention. The newcomers stopped in surprise when they saw Joe, and after an instant Eldredge said: "Hello! Have you seen—Is Foster here?"

"Hello," replied Joe. "Foster? No, he isn't coming."

"Isn't coming!" exclaimed Eldredge. Then he laughed. "What do you know about that? What did I tell you, Sam?"

Rogers nodded. "I know. You said he wouldn't."

"Fact is," said Joe, "he can't."

"Can't, eh? I suppose he's sick," sneered Eldredge.

Joe shook his head gently and pulled himself to his feet. "No, he ain't sick, he's—he's confined to his bed." He chuckled, much to the mystification of the others. Eldredge scowled.

"What is this, a silly joke?" he demanded peevishly.

"No, oh, no, it ain't any joke," answered Joe gravely. "It's this way, Eldredge. Foster's no scrapper. Doesn't know the first thing about it. Of course you didn't know that when you arranged this party. You wanted a nice little fight. Foster couldn't give it to you. Why, he doesn't know how to even block. You wouldn't have had any sport at all. It would have been all over in a wag of a duck's tail. I told him that, but he wouldn't see it. I said: 'This guy Eldredge wants a scrap, kiddo. He doesn't want to get up at that time of day just to see you topple over every time he reaches out. Give him a chance,' I said. 'You stay in bed and I'll take the job off your hands.' Course, I'm no professional, Eldredge, but I know enough to give you a bit of fun. But Foster wouldn't see it. Insisted that he had to come himself."

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"Say, for the love of Mike," broke in Eldredge, "are you crazy?"

"Me? No, I don't believe so," answered Joe mildly. "Anyway, I couldn't get him to look at it right, and so this morning I just woke up a bit early and tied him up in bed." He chuckled. "I'll bet he's spouting blue murder right now!"

"That's a likely yarn!" sneered Eldredge. "Tied up in bed! Yes, he is—not! He got you to come and tell that story to save his face!"

"Well, I sort of came to save his face," answered Joe genially, "but not just the way you mean: and he didn't have anything to do with it. He's tied right down to his bed this minute."

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"If he is," said Rogers, "he helped do it."

"No." Joe shook his head patiently. "He was asleep. I'd like you guys to believe that. It always sort of disgruntles me when folks don't believe what I tell 'em, and I'm likely to get real mad."

Rogers blinked. "Well—well, then there's nothing doing, Paul," he said very mildly.

"Nothing doing?" echoed Joe in surprise. "What do you mean, nothing doing? Ain't I here? Sure, there's something doing. Him and me—I mean he and I are going to have a real good time."

"We are not," replied Eldredge disgustedly. "It's the plainest sort of a frame-up, Sam. I knew all along Foster didn't have any sand. I told you he'd duck."

"Say, you must have got me wrong," said Joe earnestly. "Foster wanted to come, but I wouldn't let him. It wasn't fair to him or you, kiddo. Don't you see? He'd have got all messed up and you'd have been downright disappointed. That's why I took it over. You and me are about of a size and weight and I'll bet we can have a right good scrap."

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"I don't care to fight you," said Eldredge disdainfully. "Why should I? I don't even know you!"

"Well, I don't know you, either," replied Joe calmly. "So we're all-square there, eh? Listen, Brother: if you're holding back on my account, don't do it. I don't mind a scrap. Fact is, I'd be mighty disappointed if I didn't have it, after coming away over here like this. And so would you,

of course. You're like me; get sort of low-spirited if you don't have a little set-to now and then. Ain't that right?"

Eldredge was viewing Joe in mingled astonishment and uneasiness. This big, raw-boned chap didn't look good to him as an opponent. His arms were discouragingly long and the shoulders hinted at a muscular development quite unusual. Also, there was a quiet gleam in the greenish-grey eyes that made Eldredge feel a bit creepy along his spine. He laughed nervously.

"Don't be a chump," he begged. "Of course I'm not going to fight you. I had a row with Foster, but if you say he doesn't know how to fight, why, all right. We'll call it off. I don't want to fight any fellow that's no match for me——"

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"That's just what I told him," said Joe delightedly. "I said, 'That guy's going to be tickled to death when I show up instead of you.'"

"Come on," said Rogers, tugging at his friend's sleeve.

"Of course," went on Eldredge, "if Foster wants to go on with it later, I'm ready for him, but—but as far as I'm concerned I'm willing to call quits."

"Atta boy!" said Joe approvingly. "Well, now that's settled and you and me can go ahead." Joe began to peel off his sweater. Eldredge frowned and shot an anxious look at Rogers.

"I've told you I wouldn't fight you," he said, "and I won't."

"Why not?" demanded Joe. "Ain't I good enough for you? Trying to insult me, eh?" he scowled darkly. "Is that it?"

"Of course not! I haven't any row with you. Besides, it's nearly time for chapel and I don't intend to get in wrong at the Office just to please you!"

"That don't go, kiddo. I've offered to fight you and you've insulted me by refusing. That's enough. Now you pull that coat off and stand up here."

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"You're crazy! I won't be forced into a fight like this. You haven't any right to——"

Joe gave a howl. "Haven't any rights, haven't I? We'll see. No guy can tell me I haven't any rights and not fight! Now then, come on!"

"I said you hadn't any right to make me fight," protested Eldredge. "You're just——"

"I heard you!" answered Joe ominously. "Don't repeat it! It's something no guy can say to me and not answer for! By jiminy, you've got a cheek! No rights, eh? Ain't I a free-born American citizen?" Joe slung his sweater aside, slipped his suspenders down and knotted them about his waist and advanced on the embarrassed enemy. "What about the Declaration of Independence?" he demanded wrathfully.

"You know well enough what I mean," declared Eldredge somewhat shrilly. "I refuse to fight you! I haven't——"

"Insulted again!" roared Joe fearsomely. "Put up your fists!"

Eldredge was backing away toward the corner of the shed, Rogers a good two yards in the lead. "I won't! I've told you! You can't bully me into fighting when—when I've got nothing to fight about!"

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"Call me a bully now, do you?" growled Joe in ominous calm. He cast an outraged look to the heavens. "Brother, you've gone the limit. Look out for yourself!" He swung his right arm up and out. The blow, had it connected, would have lifted Eldredge off his feet and deposited him yards away. But it was woefully short, suggesting that Joe was a poor judge of distance. Nevertheless it so alarmed Eldredge that he trod on his friend's toes in his hurried retreat, and a wail of pain and protest arose from Rogers, a wail that, mingling with peals of laughter that seemed to come from overhead, made a weird confusion of sound. The group on the ground abruptly paused in their careers and bewilderedly searched the sky for that Jovian laughter. They hadn't far to seek. Atop the shed roof, their convulsed countenances showing above the peak, were stretched Leighton Keith and Harry Cater.

Joe, after a surprised recognition, grinned and unknotted his suspenders. Eldredge grew red where he had been inclined to pallor and looked unutterably foolish. Rogers smiled in a sickly fashion and dug embarrassed hands into his pockets. On the roof the unsuspected guests conquered their laughter, and Keith said to Joe: "Sorry if we—spoiled your—fun—Dobbins, but we couldn't—hold in any longer!"

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"Well, I didn't know I was amusing an audience," replied Joe, "but it don't matter." He picked up his sweater as Keith and Cater slid to the edge and dropped over. "Guess we'll have to postpone this, Eldredge," he continued. "Too many folks around, eh? I'll fix another date with you."

Katie chuckled. "I fancy Eldredge is satisfied," he said. "Eh, Paul?"

Eldredge glowered. "I didn't have any quarrel with him," he muttered. "He—he's crazy!"

Katie and Keith seemed to find this most amusing, but after a moment of laughter Keith recovered his gravity and said: "I guess you can be trusted to keep this business quiet, Eldredge. How about you, Rogers?" Rogers nodded, his countenance expressing a relief equal to Eldredge's. "Good. I know Dobbins won't talk, and neither will we. So there's no reason why the thing should get out. In a way, it's a pity to keep it to ourselves, for the fellows would certainly enjoy it, but some jokes are too good to be told. If you want to lead a happy life hereafter,

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Eldredge, you'd better keep mum! And, by the way, if I ever hear of you scrapping any more I'll be tempted to tell what happened this morning. You're much too blood-thirsty, Eldredge, you really are. Restrain yourself, my boy, restrain yourself." Eldredge muttered something as he moved away. "What was that?" asked Keith sharply. "Did I hear a bad word?"

"No," replied Eldredge aggrievedly, "you didn't. I said, 'All right.'"

"Hm: I'll try to believe you: but you'd better beat it before I begin to have doubts!"

Rogers had already melted around the corner of the shed and Eldredge, pausing only long enough to send a last vindictive glance at Joe, followed. Alone, the three looked at each other in amused silence. Then Katie helped Joe into his sweater and together they turned toward school. It was only when the forms of Eldredge and Rogers were seen hurrying into the lane that Keith's risibilities again got the better of him and he began to chuckle. Whereupon Joe and Katie joined.

It was getting dangerously close to chapel time when Myron, smouldering with anger, heard the study door open and the heavy tread of Joe approaching. When the latter appeared Myron was more than ready for him. [142]

"You—you——" he stammered, "you big—big——"

It was maddening! His nicely arranged flow of invective, his long list of insulting adjectives were gone! He couldn't get his tongue around a single word that satisfied his requirements. All he could do was glare and sputter and strain at his bonds. And Joe stood at the foot of the bed and viewed him mildly and patiently.

"You let me loose!" cried Myron. "You untie me this minute! You'll see what'll happen to you, you big—big *boob!*" Myron groaned at the utter inadequacy of that appellation and gave up the attempt to do justice to his feelings. Joe blinked.

"Got to have your promise not to start any ructions first," he announced. "It's pretty near chapel time, Foster, and if you try scrapping with me you'll be late. So'll I. Better dress quietly and let me explain things."

"I'm going to punch your ugly face!" fumed Myron. "I don't care a hang who's late to what! You can't spring your silly tricks on me like this, Dobbins! You can't——"

"Then I'll have to let you stay where you are," said Joe regretfully. [143]

["You let me up!"](#)



["You let me up!"](#)

"Promise not to start anything?"

"No!"

"Then you don't get up. You stay right here until I tell you all about it." Joe seated himself at the foot of the bed and glanced at the clock on the chiffonier. "You see, Foster, it was like this."

"I don't want to hear it! I want to get up!"

"Then give me your word to behave."

Myron studied Joe's unperturbed face, hesitated and gave in. "All right," he growled. "But I'll—I'll get even with you yet."

"Sure! Now then we'll do some hustling." For two minutes Joe was very busy with knots. "Hope these things didn't hurt," he said apologetically. "I tried to fix 'em so you'd be comfortable."

"Thanks, I'm sure," said Myron in deep sarcasm. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate your thoughtfulness!"

Joe grinned. "Well, anyway, I didn't wake you up, kiddo, did I? Didn't do you out of any sleep, eh? Say, the Sleeping Quince, or whatever the guy in the fairy story was called, hasn't a thing on you, Foster. You're the soundest little slumberer that ever pounded an ear! There you are. Now, then, slip into some duds and let's beat it. We've just got time."

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CHAPTER XIII

[145]

MYRON CHANGES HIS MIND

The fact that the incident would never become known and make him look ridiculous made it much easier for Myron to forgive Joe for the trick. And the latter's account of the meeting with Eldredge—Myron got it piecemeal before and after chapel—was so funny that he had to smile more than once in spite of his determination to be haughty and unrelenting. In the end he said grudgingly: "We-ell, I suppose you meant it all right, Dobbins, but it wasn't fair. Now was it?" And Dobbins obligingly shook his head very soberly and allowed that it wasn't. In such fashion amity was restored and peace prevailed again.

That afternoon, encountering Harry Cater on the field before practice, Myron regarded that youth keenly, looking for signs of amusement and ready to resent them. But Katie's countenance suggested no secret diversion. Perhaps he regarded Myron with just a fraction more interest than usual, but it was quite respectful interest. There was a big cut in the football candidates that afternoon and when Coach Driscoll had sheathed his knife again their number had been reduced to sixty-odd. Myron survived, as he deserved to, and so, naturally, did Joe. Joe was already being talked about and more than once had heard his playing discussed and praised. Good linemen are always in demand, and this year, at Parkinson, they were more than ever welcome, for graduation had deprived the eleven of several stars since last fall.

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The squads were reduced to four now, and Myron had slipped into a half-back position on the third. There was nothing certain about that position. Some days he went into practice at right half and some days at left, and sometimes he sat on the bench most of the time when scrimmaging began. He was rather resentful because his work wasn't getting recognition. As a matter of fact, however, he was showing up no more cleverly than half a dozen other candidates for the positions. He handled the ball well, remembered signals, ran hard and fast, dodged fairly and caught punts nicely. So did Meldrum, Brown, Brounker, Vance, Robbins and one or two more. Myron's mistake was in supposing that, because none praised him, his work wasn't appreciated. He had an idea that neither coach nor captain really knew of his existence, when, as a matter of fact, he was more than once under discussion during the nightly conferences in Mr. Driscoll's quarters.

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"Promising," was the coach's comment one evening when the subject of half-backs was before the meeting. "Plays a nice, clean-cut game. Lacks judgment, though."

"Handles punts well," said Captain Mellen. "Made a corking catch yesterday. Remember when Kearns punted down to the twenty yards? That was a peach of a punt, by the way: all of fifty, wasn't it, Ken?"

"Forty-six," answered Farnsworth.

"That all? Anyway, this Foster chap made a heady catch, with two ends almost on him and the ball nearly over his head. He'll round out nicely for next year, I guess."

It was Myron's misfortune that he had elected to try for a half-back position at a time when there was much excellent half-back material on hand. Probably he didn't realise the fact, for he began to get more disgruntled by the end of that week and secretly accused Mr. Driscoll and Jud Mellen of "playing favourites." Not altogether secretly, either, for he once aired his suspicions for Joe's benefit. "There's no chance for a chap here unless he's known," he said bitterly. "Maybe if I stay here two or three years longer Driscoll will discover that I'm alive. As it is, if it wasn't for Farnsworth keeping tabs on the fellows, I could cut practice and no one would ever know it."

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"Well, I don't know," answered Joe judicially. "It looks to me like you were getting the same treatment the rest of 'em are getting. Some day you'll show 'em what you can do and they'll wake up. I guess your trouble is that you're bucking against a lot of good backs. Take fellows like Brown and Meldrum and Vance, now. They're *good*. You've got to hand it to them, kiddo. Corking halves, all of them. Hard to beat. But that don't mean that you can't beat 'em. Buckle down and go hard, Foster. The season's young yet."

"I'm not anxious enough," answered Myron, "to kill myself. I dare say I can get along without playing on the team this year. And next year I'll go somewhere where they give a fellow a fair chance, by George!"

"Well, if that's your idea you won't get far," said Joe drily. "If you don't care yourself no one's going to care for you. A guy's got to hustle and be in earnest to get anywhere in this world. I know that!"

"You fell into it pretty soft," answered Myron, with a laugh that sounded none too agreeable. "There's nothing like getting in with the right crowd, eh?" [149]

Joe regarded him with a frown, started to speak, thought better of it and merely grunted. But after a moment he said dispassionately: "Don't be a sore-head, Foster. It don't get you anything but hard looks."

"I'm no sore-head," laughed the other carelessly. "Gee, it doesn't mean anything in my young life to play with their old football team. I've captained a better team than this school will ever turn out!"

"If I was you," replied Joe earnestly, "I'd forget about being captain of that team, kiddo, and see if I couldn't make a first-class private of myself."

Myron flushed. "It's all well enough for you to—to give advice and say cute things, Dobbins, but you've made yourself solid with the fellows who have the say in football matters and you're pretty sure of a place. I haven't, and I don't intend to. If Mellen and Cater and some of those fellows think I'm going to kow-tow to them, they're mightily mistaken."

"Meaning I got my chance by—what do you call it?—cultivating those fellows?" asked Joe. "You made that crack before and I let it pass, Foster, but it don't go this time. If I'm playing on the second squad it's because I got out there and worked like a horse, and you know it, Brother!" [150]

Myron dropped his eyes and a long moment of silence followed. Then he said: "I was a rotter, Dobbins. I'm sorry. I guess I am a sore-head, like you said. I guess—I guess I'll just quit and have done with it."

Joe laughed. "All right, kiddo! We'll start fresh. But why don't you cut out the grouching and just play the game? What's it to you if you don't get into the lime-light? Ain't it something to do what you're put at and do it well? Say, there's about sixty guys out there every afternoon, ain't there? Well, how many of them do you suppose will get places on the first team? Not more than twenty-six, probably. And about twenty more will go into the scrub team. And the others will beat it and try again next year, likely. Every one can't be a hero, Foster. Some of us have got to lug water!"

"There's no fun in lugging water, though," Myron objected.

"Who says so? There's fun in doing anything if you set out to like it, kiddo. The guys who miss the fun are those who get it into their heads that the job isn't good enough for 'em, or that some one's imposing on 'em. What sort of a fellow would Merriman be if he got that dope to working in his bean? He's lugging water, all right, believe me! Living on a couple of dollars a week and working about sixteen hours a day! But he gets fun out of it, don't he? He's about the happiest guy around these parts, ain't he? Mind you, Foster, I ain't saying that a fellow's got to be *satisfied* with just lugging water. He oughtn't to be. He ought to be thinking about the time when he can chuck the pail and do something better. But while he is lugging water he wants to do it well and whistle at it!" [151]

"All right," laughed Myron, good temper restored, "I'll keep on with the pail a while longer. Say, Dobbins, you ought to prepare for the ministry or the lecture platform. You're going to waste yourself shovelling spruce gum!"

Joe smiled. "I'm not going to shovel spruce gum, kiddo. I'm going to be a lawyer. How's that hit you?"

"If I'm ever arrested for murder I'll certainly send for you!" answered Myron emphatically.

Two days later Myron received notice that his overdue furniture had arrived. For some reason he was not nearly so keen about it as he had been a week or more ago. And when, accompanied by Joe—he had felt the need of a practical mind in the matter of getting the things off the car and up to the dormitory and had begged Joe's assistance—he saw how many pieces of furniture there were he was, to use his own word, flabbergasted. For his part, Joe just stared and blinked. Every piece was carefully and enormously crated, and the staring address on each was a horrible challenge. For the things were much larger than he remembered them and when he thought of the limited area of Number 17 Sohmer he gasped. The services of the Warne Warehouse Company had been called on, and three husky men were soon emptying the car while Myron and Joe sat on a baggage truck and looked on. Myron felt somewhat apologetic and shot occasional inquiring glances at his companion. But Joe was silent and seemingly unmoved after the first survey. Myron ventured at last: [152]

"I don't see where all the stuff is going, do you?"

Joe shook his head. "No, I don't. Maybe they'll let you put about half of it in the corridor."

"It's nothing to joke about," Myron grumbled. "We won't be able to move without barking our shins. I'd like to know how big mother thinks those rooms are!" [153]

"I'm not worrying about my shins," said Joe placidly, adding when Myron looked a question: "I won't be there, you know."

"Oh!" said the other. Silence again prevailed. The trucks trundled from box-car to platform and a nearby engine let off steam with disconcerting suddenness. Finally: "I shouldn't think you'd

want to live in that room if it's like you say it is," observed Myron. "Only one window and—and all."

"Oh, it ain't so worse. Merriman wants me to go over and take half his place, but that part of town's pretty fierce."

"Great Scott! Why, that's an awful hole he's in!"

"Well, with something more in it, it wouldn't be bad."

"I don't see——" Myron paused and was busy for a moment detaching a splinter from beside him. "I don't see," he continued, "why you want to move anyhow."

Joe turned slowly and observed him in mild surprise. "Well, considering that you invited me to," he answered, "that's a funny crack to make."

"Maybe they wouldn't let me have the rooms by myself, anyhow," said Myron. "And I'd rather have you with me than—than some fellow I didn't know at all." [154]

"Thanks, but I guess I'd better light out. I'm sort of backwoodsy for you, Foster. Maybe the next guy will be more your style, see? Besides——"

"Besides what?" demanded Myron with a frown.

Joe chuckled and nodded toward the furniture. "I couldn't live up to that," he said.

Myron's gaze followed his companion's and he viewed the crated monstrosities distastefully. "I don't see why you need to keep rubbing it in about my—my 'style,'" he said crossly. "Just because I have more than two suits of clothes you needn't always try to make out that I'm a—a——"

"I don't," answered Joe calmly. "Besides, I've got four suits myself now: and an extra pair of trousers!"

"Then—then it's just that stuff?" asked Myron, waving toward the furniture.

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe. You see, kiddo—I mean Foster——"

"Oh, dry up," muttered Myron.

"You see, I've been used to simple things. The old man and me—I—me—whatever it is—lived pretty plain for a long time. Lately we've stayed in a hotel in Portland most of the time. I ain't used to chiffoniers and enamelled tables and all those gimcracks. I'd feel sort of—of low in my mind if I had to live in a place all dolled up with ribbons and lace and mirrors and things." [155]

"There aren't any ribbons and——"

"Well, you get my idea," continued Joe untroubledly. "Me, I sort of feel freer and more contented in a log-cabin. I suppose it's all what you're used to, eh?"

Myron made no reply for a minute. They were loading the big moving-van now and he watched them morosely. He half wished they'd drop that grey-enamelled bookcase over the side. At last he said desperately: "Look here, Joe! If I dump all that truck into the warehouse will you stay?"

It was the first time he had ever called Joe by his first name and that youth looked almost startled. "Why—why, you don't want to do that!" he stammered.

"Yes, I do," replied Myron doggedly. "That's just what I do want. It was a mistake, sending it. I sort of felt so when mother suggested it, but she set her heart on it, you know: thought I'd be more comfortable and all if I had my own things. But they'd look awfully silly, all those light grey tables and chairs and bookcases, and I don't want them there. So—so I'm going to let these folks store them until spring. There's no use hurting mother's feelings, and I'll just let her think that I'm using them; unless she asks me. When spring comes I'll ship them back. And you'll stay where you are, won't you?" [156]

"Gosh! Say, this is so sudden, kiddo! And it sure seems an awful shame to hide all those corking things. But—why, if you really don't want them and—and you don't mind me being sort of rough and—and all that, I'll stick around."

"Honest, Joe?"

"Sure, kiddo!"

Myron drew a long breath of relief and turned to the man in charge of the job. "I've changed my mind," he said. "Take those things to the warehouse, will you? And tell them I'll be around tomorrow and fix things up."

CHAPTER XIV

"CHAS"

Only one thing troubled Joe, which was that he couldn't have Zephaniah with him. Faculty strongly disapproved of dogs, even very young and very small dogs, in the dormitories. So he made arrangements with a good-hearted stableman to look after the puppy and himself rigged up a home for it in an unused stall behind a litter of brooms and old harness and buckets. Puppy biscuit, which Merriman sternly decreed was to be its only food, was laid in lavishly, a china [157]

drinking bowl was supplied and Zephaniah, very unhappy at parting from his brothers and sisters and mother, was duly *installed*. The pun is not mine, but Myron's. Joe visited the stable at least once a day and was to be seen stalking along the streets accompanied by a silly, frisking little atom at the end of a magnificent leather leash. Once away from the busy thoroughfares, the puppy was set free and had a glorious time. Frequently Myron went along on these excursions and the two boys often laughed themselves sick over the ridiculous antics of Zephaniah Q. Dobbins. Several times Merriman also joined them and took along Tess and her two remaining offspring, and at such times life was chock full of excitement and merriment. The weather was wonderful that autumn and those strolls about the outskirts of the town were events that remained in Myron's memory long afterwards. They led to an ever-increasing intimacy between the three boys and Myron began to find existence at Parkinson really enjoyable. No one could fail to like Joe Dobbins or to admire his big-heartedness and sturdy honesty of purpose and deed, and Myron least of all. He saw now the kindness that had underlaid the indignity Joe had practised on him when he had been forcibly kept from meeting Paul Eldredge, and was grateful. He saw many other thoughtful and kindly acts as well. Joe's rough ways, or ways that had seemed rough at first, were now only things to smile at. Myron was learning that there were many things less to be desired in a friend and room-mate than uncouthness. New clothes, too, had made a difference in Joe. Under Myron's guiding hand he had purchased two plain but well-fitting suits—as well as the extra pair of trousers that Myron had advised and that Joe was now so proud of—and, in a way, he was living up to those suits. He had been good-naturedly guyed by many of his friends and acquaintances, of which he had dozens a week after the beginning of school, for the change wrought in his appearance had been well-nigh startling, but he hadn't minded a bit: it took more than that to upset Joe's equanimity. It was about the time that he first appeared in classroom in his new clothes that some fellow fell on the quite obvious nickname of "Whoa," to which Joe was already accustomed, and from that time on he was "Whoa" Dobbins to the whole school. Only Myron and Andrew Merriman stuck to "Joe."

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Merriman required more knowing than Joe Dobbins. Although Myron had liked him at first acquaintance and grew to like him more as time went on, he never felt that he knew him as thoroughly as he knew the other. "Merry Andrew" at first meeting seemed perfectly understandable. At the second meeting you realised that most of him was below the surface. At subsequent meetings you despaired of ever knowing him thoroughly. He was the happiest, cheerfulest fellow Myron had ever encountered, and no one would have suspected that there was such a thing as a care in his life. And perhaps there weren't many, either, for a care doesn't become a care until you let it, and Merriman's policy was not to let it. Of friends, at least close friends, beyond Joe and Andrew, Myron had none so far. He knew various fellows, most of them football chaps, but only casually. He didn't make friends easily. It is only fair to acknowledge that there was something in Myron's attitude, although he didn't realise it, that warned fellows away. Popularity such as Joe might attain would never fall to his share.

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So a fortnight passed and Parkinson played her second football game and began to find her stride. Cumner High School proved less of an adversary than expected and went down to defeat, 12 to 0. Myron didn't get into action: didn't expect to, for that matter: and neither did Joe. Joe, however, expected to, and was a little disappointed and decidedly restive while he and Myron watched from the bench. Inaction didn't suit Joe a bit. Garrison, who had played the position last season on the scrub eleven, stayed in at right guard until the last quarter and then Mills, a recent discovery of Coach Driscoll's, was given a chance. Mills, a big, yellow-haired infant of seventeen, proved willing and hard-working, but he was woefully inexperienced, and only the fact that Cumner had already shot her bolt and was playing a strictly defensive game kept him in until the final whistle.

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Joe's hero on the team was Leighton Keith, who played right tackle. Joe expatiated for whole minutes at a time on Keith's work and rather bored Myron. "Honest, Joe," he protested, "I think he plays perfectly good ball and all that, but I don't see where he has anything on Mellen, or even Flay."

Joe shook his head. "You aren't watching him, Myron. You've got to know the position, too. I've played tackle, kiddo, and I know what a guy's up against. I'll tell you about Keith and Mellen. Mellen's a fair, average tackle, a heap better on attack than defence, I guess, but Keith's more than that. He—look here, it's like this. Know those dollar 'turnips'? Well, they keep right good time, don't they?"

"Some of them," agreed Myron.

"Most of them, Brother. Well, Mellen's like a dollar watch. Looks good outside and works all right inside. Dependable and all that. All right! Now did you ever cast your eye over a nice hundred and fifty dollar watch all dotted over inside with jewels and all glisteny with little wheels and dudads? Sure! That's Keith. He works just like the innards of that watch, kiddo. Every move's exact. He never misses a tick. He's smooth-running and guaranteed. He—he's an artist! I'd just as lief see Keith play tackle as see old Josh Reynolds paint one of his million-dollar portraits."

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"Reynolds is dead," laughed Myron.

"All the more reason then," replied Joe calmly. "Keith isn't!"

"All right," said Myron, "you cheer for Keith. To my mind the best player in that brown bunch is Cater."

"Yeah, he's good, too," owned Joe. "I call him a nice little quarter. Nice fellow, too, Cater. So's Steve Kearns. Know him?"

"Playing full-back? No, only to nod to. I don't think he's as good a full-back as Williams, though."

"Both of them will stand improving," said Joe drily. "Gee, I wish Driscoll would let me in on this!"

But, as has been said, he didn't, and when the game was over Joe and Myron trotted back to the gymnasium with a host of others equally unfortunate. After showers and a return to citizen's clothing they took Zephaniah Q. Dobbins for a walk. Or, it would be more exact to say, a romp.

The Latin coaching ended the last of the next week, by which time Andrew Merriman declared Myron up with the class. Myron wasn't so certain of it and would have continued the tutoring if Andrew hadn't refused. "You're discharged," said Andrew. "You know about as much as Old Addie himself now, and a lot more than I. All you have got to do is study."

"Is that all?" asked Myron ironically. "It isn't anything if you say it quick, is it?"

But Andrew proved right about it, and Myron found that as much work applied to Latin as to other studies kept him on good terms with Old Addie.

There was one thorn in Myron's side at this time, and its name was Charles Cummins. Cummins was a riddle to Myron. Ever since the time he had spent that unpleasant half-hour in Cummins' awkward squad the freckle-faced, shock-haired giant had never let an opportunity pass to accost him. There was no harm in that, of course; the trouble was that Cummins always made himself so disagreeable! It seemed to Myron that the chap deliberately sought him out in order to rile him. And it wasn't so much what Cummins said as the way he said it. It got so that Myron only had to see the other approaching to feel huffy. Long before Cummins got within speaking distance Myron had his back up, and Cummins, knowing it, seemed to take delight in it.

Cummins was generally known as "Chas," from his habit of signing himself "Chas. L. Cummins." He declared that Charles was far too long to spell out. He played left guard and played it well if erratically. In a way, he was difficult to get along with, for he considered himself a law unto himself, and it was no unusual thing for him to veto a coach's instructions, which, up to a certain point, the coach stood for. The others were at outs with him half the time, but liked him through all. Oddly enough, even the timidest youngster he ever bullied and brow-beat in practice was strong for him afterwards. It was no secret that he was holding his position on the first team by little more than an eyelash, for Brodhead was hot on his trail and Coach Driscoll had put up with more of Cummins' calm insurrection than was agreeable to him. In appearance "Chas" was a broad, heavily-built giant with much red-brown hair that never was known to lie straight, eyes that nearly matched the hair and a round, freckled face that was seldom neutral. It was either scowling savagely or grinning broadly. For his part, Myron preferred Cummins' scowls to his smiles, for the smiles generally held mischief. Usually the two encountered each other only on the playfield in the afternoon, but one morning a few days after the Cumner game Myron, walking back to the room after a chemistry class, sighted Cummins coming out of Goss Hall.

"Gee, there's that pest!" he muttered, and, contrary to school regulations, started on a short cut across the grass in the hope of avoiding him. But it was not to be. Cummins had sighted his prey.

"O Foster!" he called.

Myron nodded and kept on.

"Tarry, I prithee! I wouldst a word with thee, fair youth!"

"Go to thunder!" murmured Myron. But Cummins headed him off without difficulty.

"S'pose you know," he said, "that we can both be shot at sunrise for walking cross-lots like this. Where do you room?"

"Sohmer," answered Myron briefly.

"Ho, with the swells, eh? Lead on, Reginald! I would visit thy fair abode in yon palace!"

"Not receiving today, thanks," said Myron. "I've got some work to do."

"Work? Didn't suppose you silk-stocking bunch in Sohmer ever had to work! Thought you had slaves to do that sort of thing. How little one half the school knows how t'other half lives! To think of you soiling your lily-white hands and getting calloused with labour! What sort of work are you going to do? Clip coupons?"

"Oh, dry up!" exploded Myron. "I'm sick to death of your chatter! And I'm sick of being guyed all the time, too! Lay off, can't you?"

To his surprise, "Chas" chuckled and thumped him on the back. "A-a-ay!" he applauded. "That's the stuff, old chap! I was beginning to think you didn't have any pep in you. There's always hope for a fellow who can get mad!"

"That isn't hard when you're around," answered Myron, unappeased. "Don't bang me on the back, either. I don't like it."

"All right," answered Chas, sobering. "I'll behave. Mind if I come up for a few minutes?"

Myron looked at him suspiciously, but for once Cummins was neither scowling nor grinning. "I guess not," he answered ungraciously.

"Fine! But don't embarrass me with your welcome, old chap," chuckled Chas as they mounted the steps. "Some dive this, isn't it? Don't believe I ever hoped to get in here." Joe was not in and

when Chas had looked around the study—a trifle disappointedly, Myron thought—and seen the view from the window he seated himself on the window-seat, took one knee into his hands and viewed his host reflectively. Myron, at the table, fussed with his books and fumed inwardly and wished Cummins would get out. Finally the latter said: “Foster, you and I ought to be great pals.”

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Myron looked every bit of the astonishment he felt, and his guest chuckled again. “Because we’re as unlike as three peas, and the only things that can be more unlike than three peas is four peas. You’ve got coin and I’m the poor but proud scion of a fine old chap who made his living laying bricks. You’re a swell and I’m a—well, I’m not. You’re a sort of touch-me-not and I’d make friends with any one. Probably we don’t think alike on any two subjects under the sun. So we ought to hit it off great. Get the idea?”

“I’m afraid I don’t,” owned the other, interested and puzzled.

“It’s the old law of the attraction of opposites, or whatever it’s called. Now I took a shine to you right off”—Myron sniffed, but Chas only smiled and went on—“Oh, I don’t always hug a chap I take a fancy to. That’s not my way. I try ‘em out first. I tried you out, Foster, old chap.”

“Did you? Well, much obliged, but——”

“You’d rather I minded my own business, you mean? That’s what I like about you, Foster, that stand-offishness. I like the way you sort of turn your nose up and look haughty. You see, I’m not like that. If a stranger says ‘Howdy’ to me I either say ‘Glad to know you’ or I biff him one and pass on. I couldn’t freeze him with a glance as you can to save my precious life.”

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“I didn’t know I was as bad as that,” said Myron, a trifle uncomfortable. “I don’t think I mean to be.”

“Course you don’t. That’s the beauty of it. It comes natural to you, just like liking artichokes and olives. I’ll bet you anything you were eating olives when you were four, and I haven’t got to really like the pesky things yet!”

“You talk a lot of nonsense,” said Myron, smiling in spite of himself. “Just what are you getting at?”

“Well, I’m not after a loan, anyway,” laughed Chas. “I was telling you that I tried you out. So I did. ‘He looks like he was a nice sort under the shell,’ says I to me. ‘A terrapin isn’t awfully jolly and friendly when he sticks his head out at you and hisses, but they tell me that when you get under the shell he’s mighty good eating.’ So, thinks I——”

“The idea being that I’ve got to be dead to be nice?” asked Myron drily.

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“No, not a bit. The—the simile was unfortunate. No, but I thought I’d get a peek under the shell and see what you were really like. So I set out to make you mad. If a fellow can’t get mad he’s no good. Anyway, he’s no good to me. And he’s no good for football. I was just about giving you up, old chap. You frowned and grumbled and sputtered once or twice and looked haughty as anything, but you wouldn’t get your dander up. Not until today.”

“Well,” said Myron, “now that I have got mad, what’s the big idea?”

“Why, now we can be pals,” answered Chas unhesitatingly. “How does that strike you?”

“Why—why, I don’t know!” Myron faltered. “It sounds like some sort of a silly joke to me, Cummins.”

“No joke at all.” Chas unclasped his hands and leaned back, his big, freckled face wreathed in smiles. “No hurry, though. Think it over. Anyway, there’s something more important just now. I’ve watched you on the field, Foster, ever since they dumped you on me that day. I’ve seen you play and I can tell you what I think of you, if you like.”

It’s human to like flattery in moderation, and so Myron said “Go ahead,” and prepared to look modest.

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“I think you’re rotten,” said Chas.

“Wh-what?” gasped Myron.

“Rotten, with a large capital R, Foster.”

“Thanks!”

“Don’t get huffy, old chap. I don’t say you can’t play good football. I think you can. But you’re not doing it now. If I didn’t think you could play the game according to the Old Masters I wouldn’t be talking about it to you. You play like a fellow who doesn’t care. You don’t try hard enough. You don’t deliver the goods. You’re soldiering. Ever see a man laying a shingle roof? Well, he could do the whole thing in a day, maybe, if he worked hard. But he belongs to the union and the union won’t let him lay more than just so many shingles. So he has to slow down. That’s like you. Say, what union do you belong to?”

“I guess the trouble is that I *don’t* belong,” said Myron. “I’m an outsider, and so I don’t get a chance.”

“Tell that to the Marines! Look here, old chap, you can make a real football player of yourself if you want to. I’ve watched you and I know. I’ve seen what you could have done lots of times when you didn’t do it. Now, just what is the row?”

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So Myron told him his version of it and Chas listened silently and even sympathetically. But at the end he shook his head. “You’re all wrong, Foster,” he said. “I’ve been here two years now and

I know how things go. The trouble with you, I guess, is that you came here with the idea that folks were going to fall all over themselves to shake hands with you and pull you into the football team. Isn't that pretty near so?"

It was, and Myron for the first time realised it, but he couldn't quite get himself to acknowledge it to Cummins. He tried to look hurt and made no answer.

"Sure!" said Chas. "And when the coach and the captain didn't give a dinner in your honour and ask you to accept a place on the team and give them the benefit of your advice as to running same you got peeved. That's just what I'd have done if I'd been you, you see, so I know. If it was me I'd have either gone to the coach and made a big kick and told him how good I was or else I'd have gone out and played so hard that they'd have either had to take me on or chuck me to save the lives of the others! But you, being Haughty Harold, just froze them with a glance—which same they didn't happen to see—and went your way. And it's a rotten way, too. Because it won't get you anywhere. Driscoll won't fall for you until you show something and you won't show anything until Driscoll pats you on the back. Say, I'm talking a whole lot! What time is it? And you've got some digging to do! I'll beat it. Think over my words of wisdom, Foster, and drop around tonight and hear more. I've got a plan, old chap. I'm in 16 Goss; first floor, on the right. Bye-bye!"

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And before Myron could agree or refuse the invitation Cummins had hurried to the door and was clattering downstairs. Myron went to the window and, in somewhat of a daze, watched Cummins emerge below and disappear under the trees. Then he sat himself down on the window-seat, plunged both hands into trousers pockets and frowned intently at his shoes. He didn't get much studying done that hour.

CHAPTER XV

THE PLAN

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There was hard practice that afternoon in preparation for the Musket Hill Academy game, and the second squad, in process of becoming the second team, with a coach and signals of its own, was sent against the first for three long periods. Myron found himself with the third squad, as usual, however, and ended practice with a half-hour scrimmage against the substitutes. Perhaps Cummins' words had made an impression, for he certainly played good, hard ball today and ran rings around the opposing ends and backs. As they played on the second team gridiron, while the first team was battling, his performance was not noted by the coach. But Keene, an end who was off with a bad ankle and who refereed the scrimmage, saw and casually made mention of Myron's work to Jud Mellen later.

"That chap Foster played a nifty game today," said Keene. "He might bear watching, Jud."

"Foster? Yes, he's not half bad. If we didn't have so many good halves he might be useful. Best we can do for him, though, is to carry him over for next year, I guess."

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"Well, he's a pretty player. It seems too bad to waste him. How would he fit at end?"

"Looking for a chance to retire?" laughed Jud. "What would we do with another end, Larry? Have a heart, man!"

"Well, but he ought to be tried somewhere, just the same, Jud. He plays so blamed smooth!"

"I wonder if he'd make a quarter." Jud paused in the act of lacing a shoe and stared speculatively at a grated and dusty window. Then he shook his head. "I guess we're good enough at quarter. We'll know better after Saturday's game, though. How's the foot getting on? Going to be able to play a bit?"

"Sure! It's coming on fine. I'll be good for the whole game."

"Yes, you will, son! A couple of quarters is about your stunt, I guess. Driscoll wants to give O'Curry a show, anyway. Know what I think? Well, I think Musket Hill's going to give us a tough old tussle. They've got almost every lineman they had last year and the same quarter; and you know what the score was last time."

"Twelve to ten, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and it ought to have been turned around, for they played us to a standstill in the second half. Driscoll's firm for starting with a second-string line, but I don't like it. That Musket Hill coach is a fox. If they get a score on us in the first quarter we'll be lucky to pass them."

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"They play hard ball, and that's no joke," agreed Keene. "I hope he pulls me out before Grafton gets in."

"What's the matter with Graf?"

"I don't know, but I can't seem to get on with him. I think he plays too much for the centre of the line. There's always a hole there and I get about two yards more of territory to look after. You keep your place, but Grafton sort of wanders in."

"Glad you spoke of it," answered Jud. "I'll watch him. Going over?"

Up to a half-hour after supper Myron was convinced that he had no intention of visiting Cummins that evening. Cummins was a lot more decent than he had thought him, in fact a rather likable fellow, but he had a disagreeable way of saying things that—well, didn't need to be said. Besides, there was something almost indecent in telling another that you liked him and asking him to be pals! Even if Cummins had taken a fancy to him, as he declared, at least he might have kept it to himself. But when supper was over and Myron had turned on the steam in Number 17—the evenings were getting decidedly chilly now—and settled himself to write a letter home, Cummins' freckled countenance insisted on obtruding itself between him and the sheet of grey, yellow-monogrammed paper. Joe had not returned to the room and, when the letter was written and he had brushed up on Latin and math., he would be pretty well bored, he supposed. He got as far as "Dear Mother and Father: I didn't get this letter written yesterday because I was very busy—" Then, after trying to recall what he had been busy with and fiddling with the self-filling device on his pen for a good ten minutes, he gave it up. He guessed he'd walk over and hear what Cummins' plan was. Not that it interested him any, but he didn't feel like writing just now.

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Cummins himself answered Myron's knock, although the battered door of Number 16 bore not only his card but that of "Guy Henry Brown," to the end of which name some facetious person had added the letters "D.D." Brown, who played right half on the first team, was not at home, however, and Cummins, stretched out along the window-seat, was the sole occupant of the room. The room served as study and chamber both, and a narrow, white-enamelled bed stood against the wall on each side. The rest of the furnishings were nondescript and had evidently seen long service. A few posters adorned the painted walls and the carpet was so threadbare in places that one had to guess at the original pattern and hue. Nevertheless, there was a comfortable and home-like look to Number 16 which Myron acknowledged. Cummins tore himself from the book he was reading with unflattering deliberateness and indicated a shabby automatic rocking-chair.

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"Try the Nerve Dispeller," he invited. "So called because when used your own nerves leave you and go to the other chap, who has to watch you rock. It's all right; it won't go over; that's just its playful way."

"What were you reading?" asked Myron, by way of conversation.

Chas held the book up and the visitor was surprised to see that it was what he mentally called "a kid's story."

"Oh," he murmured.

Chas grinned. "I know, but I like them. They're easy to understand and there's generally something doing all through; and you can't say that for these novels some of the fellows pretend to read. I tried to wade through one last summer. Nothing happened until I got to page 112, and then the hero changed his shoes. Maybe he changed back again later, but I ducked. Well, how are you tonight?"

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"Me? All right, thanks." Myron wondered why he had said "Me," and then realised that he had caught the trick from Joe. "I had a letter to write, but I couldn't seem to get at it, and so I thought I'd drop over and see—hear—"

"That plan? Well, it's a good one. Put your feet up here, will you, and keep that thing still? Do you mind? It pretty nearly sets me crazy to talk to any one who's bobbing back and forth like one of those china mandarins! I'd have chucked that chair long ago, only Guy hates it worse than I do. Do you know him, by the way? Guy Brown: plays right half on the first."

"Only to speak to. I'm not well acquainted amongst the ministry."

"Oh, that? Some fresh youth wrote that and a couple of days afterwards Hale called—Do you have him in physics? He lives down the hall—and said it was sacrilegious. But I told him it stood for 'Decent Dub' and he calmed down. Say, Foster, can you keep a secret?"

"Yes, of course."

"There's no 'of course' about it," said Chas. "Lot's of fellows can't. I'm not very good at it myself. But I guess you're one of the kind who can. Well, here it is. I'm going to be captain next year."

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"Are you? Captain of what?" asked Myron politely.

"Football, you chump! What did you think, the Tennis Team?"

"Oh!" Myron stared, wondering whether the other was joking. But Chas appeared to be quite in earnest and returned Myron's gaze with an expression of bland inquiry.

"Does that interest you?" he asked.

"It interests me to know how you know you are," said Myron.

"Of course. Remember that it's a secret. If you ever tell any one what I've just said I'll draw and quarter you and frizzle you crisp in boiling oil. I know it, old chap, because I'm after the job, and what I go after I get. Unless some dark horse develops between now and the Kenwood game I'm certain to get it. So we'll call that settled, shall we?"

"Just as you say," laughed Myron. "If you want it, though, I hope you get it."

"Thanks. Of course, I realise that it isn't usual to mention such matters. You're not supposed to know that there is such a thing as a captaincy. When you get it you nearly die of surprise. Well, that's not me. I'm after it. Mean to get it, too. I wouldn't say this to every fellow because most of them would be so shocked at my—my indelicacy they'd never get over it. Besides which, they'd

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probably vote against me." Chas chuckled. "So can you if you like, Foster. I'm not making a bid for your vote."

"I'm not likely to have one," replied Myron drily.

"You will have if my plan works out. Now you listen. If I'm going to captain next year's team—and I am, old chap; don't you doubt it!—I want some players around me. I don't want to run up against Kenwood and get licked. That might do when some other fellow's running things, but not when I am. No, I want some real players with me, Foster. So I'm building my team this fall."

Myron laughed. "Honest, Cummins, you're the craziest chump I ever met! Are you—are you in earnest?"

"Why not? Good, practical scheme, isn't it? What's wrong with it?"

"Well, but—you're not captain! And how can you build up a team when you're not?"

"How? You watch me. Take your case, old chap. Maybe you won't make good this year. Mind, I say *maybe*. I think you will. But if you don't, what?" Myron shook his head helplessly, signifying he gave it up and that no matter what the answer proved to be he was beyond surprise! "Why, you'll be A1 material for next—if you keep your head up. That's my game, to see that you keep going and learn all the football you can and don't drop out of training after the season's over. I think basket-ball will be a good thing for you to take up, Foster. Or you might go in for the gymnastic team. But I won't have you playing baseball, so don't get that bug in your bonnet. Baseball's spoiled a lot of good football chaps. Track's all right if you don't overdo it. We'll settle all that later, though."

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"Very well," agreed Myron docilely. "Don't mind me."

Chas grinned. "Not going to—much. But you see the idea, don't you? What do you think of it?"

"I think," returned Myron deliberately, "that it's one of the craziest schemes I ever heard of."

Chas looked much pleased. "All right. And then what?"

"And I think it may work out beautifully."

"Sure it will! So that's why I went after you, old chap. You're a 'prospect.'"

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"Oh," said Myron demurely, "I thought it was because you had taken a violent fancy to me."

"That too! Don't make any mistake, old chap. I want fellows of the right sort, and I want fellows that I like and who like me. I can do things with that sort: they'll work for me. And I'll work for them: work my fingers off if necessary. Now for the plan."

"I'm listening," said Myron.

"How'd you like to get on the first this fall, Foster?"

"Well, seeing that I'm black-and-blue pretty nearly all over, that seems sort of—of idle!"

"Just getting black-and-blue isn't enough, old chap. Lots of dubs are purple-and-green that'll be dropped next week. Now, look here. Who told you you were a born half-back?"

"No one, of course. I've played that position, though, and know it. I played end for a while too, but half seemed to be my place."

"Yes. Well, we've got exactly five good to middling half-backs this year, Foster, and you're no better than about two of them and not nearly so good as two more, Brown and Meldrum. So, you see, you're sort of up against it. See that, don't you?"

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"I suppose so. Just the same, if I had a chance I might beat Brounker and Vance, and then, if Brown or Meldrum—"

"Broke his neck you'd get in?" asked Chas impatiently. "What's the good of that sort of figuring? What you want to do, old chap, is to go after something that shows a chance of success. That other game's too much like waiting for dead men's shoes, as they say. You might get into the big game for five minutes, or you might not. And I'm not so dead sure that you could beat out those fellows. And, anyway, there's still Robbins against you. Yes, I know he isn't such a wonder now, but suppose he starts to come while you're coming? How do you know he won't come just as fast, or a little bit faster? No, that's rotten planning, Foster. You're all wrong. Forget that you're a half and go hard after a job that's open to you."

"Where'll I find it?" asked Myron. "What other position is there?"

"Full-back," said Chas.

CHAPTER XVI

CONSPIRACY

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"Full-back!" exclaimed Myron. "Why, I never played it! I don't know it! I—"

"Piffle! What's the difference? Any chap who can play half well can play full-back decently. Besides, I've got a strong hunch that you'd make a good one, Foster. You aren't as heavy as I'd

like you, but you're fast and you start quick and you hit 'em hard. When it comes right down to it, I'm not sure I wouldn't as soon have a lighter man who can jump off quick as a heavier one who gets going slow. But the big idea about turning you into a full-back is that you'll have a fair show for that position. I like Steve Kearns, but he ought never to have been taken back from the line. He was a mighty promising tackle last year until Desmond got damaged and we had to have a full-back in a hurry. As for Williams and Bob Houghton, they aren't more than fair. There's a nice job waiting for a smart, steady full-back who'll live on the premises and be kind to the dogs, Foster. And I nominate you."

Myron made no answer for a moment. This thing of having some one else arrange his affairs was a bit startling. Finally he said, doubtfully: "Aren't we forgetting that Driscoll and Mellen have something to say, Cummins?" [185]

"Not a bit of it. What we've got to do is show them that you are the fellow they want there. Then they'll simply have to have you."

"It would be learning a new game, though."

"Rot! The positions aren't very different. Just think a minute." Myron thought. Then:

"How about punting?" he asked dubiously.

"I've seen you do thirty," answered Chas.

"You seem to have made a life study of me," laughed Myron. "Yes, I can do thirty, and better, too, I guess, but I've never had much of it to do and I don't believe that I can place my kicks, and I don't know how I'd get along if a bunch of wild Indians was tearing down on me. I'd probably get frightfully rattled and try to put the ball down my neck, or something."

"You'd need practice, of course," Chas granted. "I could show you a few things myself, and if you went after the position Driscoll would see that you got plenty of punting work. Don't let that worry you. The thing to do, and it may not be so easy, is to persuade Driscoll that you have the making of a good full-back." [186]

"Ye-es." Myron was silent a minute. "I'd like to ask you something, Cummins," he said at last.

"Shoot!"

"What other changes are you considering on the team?"

Chas chuckled. "None, just now. I had thought—but never mind that. You see, what I want to do, Foster, is to fix things so that when next September rolls around I'll have the making of a good team. A lot of this year's bunch will graduate, you know. I've got to make sure that there'll be other chaps to take their places. For instance, Steve Kearns, even if he was a corking good full-back, wouldn't do me any good next fall because he won't be here. Don't get it into your bean that I'm queering this year's team for the sake of next year's, though, because that's not the idea. I wouldn't do that if I could."

"I begin to believe you could, all right," said Myron. "I have a notion that if you thought it would be better to have some one else captain you'd talk Mellen into resigning!"

"Well, I dare say I'd try it," laughed Chas. "Now what do you say?"

"About this full-back business? Why, I'm willing, Cummins. I'm not getting anywhere as a half-back, and I guess I wouldn't do much worse at the other stunt. But what I don't see is how I'm to persuade the coach to let me change." [187]

"I know. I haven't got that quite doped out yet. I don't believe just asking for a chance to play full-back would do. He might fall for it, and he might not. You let me mull that over until tomorrow and I'll see if I can't hit on some scheme. Meanwhile, if I were you I'd sort of put myself through an exam and see how much I knew about playing full. You might take a book that I have along with you and read what it says about it. It's not a very new book, but it's the best that's ever been written, and there isn't much difference in a full-back's job then and now. I'll see you at the field tomorrow. By the way, are you going with the team Saturday?"

"To North Lebron? I don't know. I don't suppose Driscoll will take me with the squad, but I might go along and see the game."

"You'd better. It doesn't hurt a fellow to see all the football he can, even if he sees it from the stand. Got to beat it? Well, here's the book, old chap. And mind, not a word to any one about this business. It's between you and me, Foster."

Myron found Joe and Andrew Merriman in the room when he got back, and he took his part in the talk for a half-hour or so. When Andrew went he pushed his school books aside and opened the little blue-bound volume that Cummins had loaned him. Joe, across the table, half-hidden by the drop-light, knotted his fingers in his hair and groaned at intervals. At ten both boys yawned and went to bed. Myron was not a sparkling success in Latin class the next forenoon. [188]

A three o'clock recitation made him somewhat late for practice and Cummins was trotting about the gridiron in signal work when he arrived at the field. Mr. Driscoll sent him over to the second team gridiron to join the third squad and so, after all, he didn't learn from Cummins whether the latter had found a solution to their problem. Nor did he run across Cummins again that day. The first team was let off early, all save the punters and goal-kickers, and Cummins had left the gymnasium when Myron got there at half-past five. He considered looking him up at his room after supper, but he had rather more than half promised Joe to go over to Merriman's and so decided not to.

There was no practice for the first the next afternoon, but the other squads were put through a full day's work. To Myron's surprise, Cummins took command when scrimmage time came, Coach Driscoll disappearing from the field. Myron found himself at left half on the second squad, with Houghton at full-back. In that position he played for five minutes. Then Cummins, who was evidently very hard to please today, called a halt.

"That'll do, Bob," he told Houghton. "O Billy! Got a full-back there?"

"I have not," answered the trainer. "I've got a half here. Want him?"

"Wait a minute." Cummins ran his eye over the second squad backs. "Foster, have you ever played full?" he growled.

"No," answered Myron.

"Want to try it? All right, fall back here. Send your half in, Billy."

Myron heartily wished that Cummins hadn't shifted him, for while he had a very fair notion of a full-back's duties, he wasn't at all keen about displaying his knowledge under those circumstances. He was, he felt, bound to make a hash of the job, and there were several fellows within a few yards who would be tickled to death to have him do so. He was glad he had discounted his failure by acknowledging his inexperience. When Cummins had asked him, he hadn't known whether the temporary coach had expected him to say yes or no. He didn't know yet, but he felt that his reply had certainly been the better one.

Cummins wasn't gentle with him. Every mistake he made, and he made many, was pointed out to him in emphatic language. Myron wanted to pinch himself to make certain that he wasn't dreaming. Cummins had conspired with him to get him into the position of full-back and now he was snarling and growling at him quite as though Myron had forced himself into the place on false pretences. Myron thought that in consideration of the circumstances Cummins might have dealt a little less harshly with his shortcomings. But, on the whole, Myron didn't do so badly. He honestly believed that he was playing as well as the deposed Houghton. Cummins didn't let him punt, for which he was grateful, and he encouraged Warren, who was playing at quarter, to use many end plays. Outside of tackle, Myron was usually successful whenever he received the pigskin, and he once or twice made good on plunges at the centre of the line. There, however, his lack of weight told somewhat. In the first twelve-minute period the second squad got one touchdown and goal and might have had a second score if Cummins had not put them back from the eight yards to the eighteen on some whim of his own. Third got the ball on downs six inches from the last white streak and punted out of danger, and the second was mad enough to rend Cummins limb from limb! When a five-minute rest came Cummins called Myron from the bench and led him into the field. To those watching it was perfectly evident that Chas was telling the green full-back how absolutely rotten he was. They would have been surprised had they heard the conversation out there.

"You weren't half bad, old chap," said Chas eagerly, yet scowling ferociously still. "You slowed up once or twice when you hit the line, though. Try to keep going hard. A good way to do is to think of the other fellow's goal line instead of his players. Sort of make yourself think that's where you're going. You'll get farther before you're stopped, if you are stopped. How do you like it?"

"All right," answered Myron, a bit grumpily. "But considering that I've never played it before it seems to me you might let up on me a bit. You go on as if I'd murdered my grandmother!"

"Why, sure," chuckled Chas. "You don't want those fellows to think I'm pulling for you, do you? It's got to look like an accident, don't you see? I want to be able to tell Driscoll tonight that you went in at full in an emergency and played a corking good game. Then, if he has half the sense I think he has, he will put you in there himself the first of the week and look you over. By the way, want to try a little punting in the next period?"

"I don't believe I'd better," answer Myron. "I guess I'd rather not."

"Maybe you're right. If you made a mess of a punt it would sort of take off a few good marks. All right. Now see if you can do a little better still this half. And don't mind my growls, old chap. You're getting no worse than any other fellow would get."

Twelve more minutes of hard playing followed in which the third turned the tables with a long run that netted a touchdown. But the try-at-goal failed and, after the second had battered its way to the enemy's twelve yards, Warren's attempt at a drop-kick went wide and the referee, the assistant manager, blew his whistle. In that second period Myron did a little better because he was learning his duties, but it would be an exaggeration to say that he showed phenomenal ability as a full-back. He made several good games, gains, was strong in defensive play and got off one very pretty forward pass to Mistle that netted twenty yards. In short, Chas had to show a little more enthusiasm than he actually felt when he spoke to Coach Driscoll that evening. There had been a final conference in the coach's room at half-past seven attended by the trainer, the managers and seven of the players, and the last problem of the morrow's game had been solved more or less satisfactorily. Afterwards, Chas remained behind with Jud Mellen and Farnsworth and Harry Cater for a sociable chat. None of them meant to talk football, and none of them did for a full quarter of an hour, but it is difficult to keep the subject uppermost in the mind out of the conversation, and presently Jud said thoughtfully:

"I wish we had about three more good plays, Coach."

"We've got enough, Cap," was the confident reply. "No use trying to remember too many at this

time of the season. Better know ten or twelve well than half know twenty. It isn't lack of plays that will beat us tomorrow, if we *are* beaten——"

"Sure to be," interpolated Katie cheerfully.

"Well, it'll be because we haven't got our attack working, then. Musket Hill is well ahead of us in development, and that's going to count, fellows. However, we may show them something, at that."

"By the way, Coach," said Chas, "I ran out of full-backs this afternoon and used that fellow Foster through most of two periods. He wasn't half rotten, if you ask me. He'd never played it in his life, either."

"Foster? What happened to Houghton?"

"It wasn't his day," said Chas. "So I had to find some one else for the second squad."

"Houghton hasn't had a day for a good while," murmured Farnsworth drily.

"For the love of Mike," exclaimed Jud Mellen, "if we can make a full-back of Foster, let's do it, Coach! It's the weakest position on the team right now."

"I've been thinking that Kearns would come on," said Mr. Driscoll, "but he doesn't seem to get the hang of it."

"He works hard enough," said Katie.

"How did you happen to choose Foster?" asked the Coach of Chas. "You had Wiborg. He's played full."

"Don't think he was there. I asked Billy and Billy only offered me a half."

"Wiborg wasn't out today," explained the manager. "He's been having some trouble with the Office. Nothing serious, I believe, but he asked for a cut."

"You say Foster showed up pretty well, Cummins?"

"He really did, Coach. Of course, I don't know how he'd be at punting, but he made some mighty good gains from kicking formation and went into the third pretty hard from close in."

"He could be taught enough punting to get by with," suggested Captain Mellen. "Maybe he'll be a find, Coach. I've said right along that he looked good."

"No harm in trying him," mused Mr. Driscoll. "If Kearns doesn't show something tomorrow we'll need a good full-back. Much obliged for the tip, Cummins. Well, good night, fellows. Get a good sleep and be ready with the punch tomorrow. We want that game if we can get it!"

CHAPTER XVII

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

The team left for North Lebron at eleven o'clock the next forenoon. The town that had the honour of containing Musket Hill Academy was not so far away in distance, but those who had arranged the train service had not consulted the Parkinson School Football Team, and as a result of this oversight there was an hour and a half to be spent at a junction that boasted, besides a decrepit station, only a blacksmith's shop, a general store and eight assorted dwellings. Myron knew that there were eight dwellings because he counted them twice. There wasn't much of anything else to do.

He was not journeying to North Lebron in any official capacity, for his name had not been amongst those announced yesterday by Manager Farnsworth. He was going along, with some sixty other "fans," mostly because Chas Cummins had insisted on his doing so. Privately, he had entertained the thought up to an hour after breakfast that, not having been invited to attend the contest as a member of the team, it would be the part of dignity to remain away. But Chas wasn't greatly concerned with dignity, and he had a masterful way with him, and the result was that at a little before nine o'clock Myron was in possession of the knowledge that he was going to North Lebron at eleven-four.

At twelve he was seated on an edge of the platform at the junction, juggling three pebbles in his hand and boredly wondering what it would be like to have to live in the fifth dwelling; the one with the blue-green blinds and the sagging porch and the discarded wagon-seat serving as a porch settle. The day was positively hot for October and few of the travellers had elected to remain inside the coaches. Some of the school fellows were adorning the platform, like Myron, others were strolling about the adjacent landscape in search of adventures, and a merry handful were exercising the baggage truck up and down the planks to the restrained displeasure of the sad-looking station agent. Coming over, Myron had shared a seat with a stranger, a lad of fourteen or so, and had managed to pass the time in conversation on various subjects, but now the youngster had disappeared and no one else appeared to care about taking his place. Joe and Chas were with the football crowd in the forward car, and Myron had seen neither of them to speak to since leaving Warne. Andrew Merriman had not been able to come. In consequence, Myron had no one to talk to and was fast reaching the decision that he would have had more

pleasure had he remained at home. Even the assurance that he was irreproachably arrayed in a suit of cool grey flannel, with a cap to match, a cream-coloured shirt and patriotic brown tie and stockings didn't mitigate his boredom. Of late he had been deriving less satisfaction than of yore from his attire. Somehow, whether his tie and stockings matched or whether his trousers were smoothly pressed seemed of less consequence to him. Several times of late he had forgotten his scarf-pin!

His discontented musings were interrupted by the arrival beside him of a youth of perhaps nineteen. Myron had glimpsed him once on the train and been struck by his good looks and by the good taste of his attire. He wore blue serge, but it was serge of an excellent quality and cut to perfection. And there was a knowing touch to the paler blue scarf with its modest moonstone pin and something pleasantly exceptional in the shape of the soft collar. Myron felt a kindred interest in the tall, good-looking youth, and determined to speak to him. But the stranger forestalled him, for, as soon as he had seated himself nearby on the platform edge, he turned, glancing at Myron and remarked: "Hot, isn't it?"

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The stranger's tone held just the correct mixture of cordiality and restraint. Myron, agreeing, felt flattered that the well-dressed youth had singled him out. The weather, as a subject of conversation, soon failed, but there were plenty of other things to discuss, and at the end of ten minutes the two were getting on famously. The stranger managed to inform Myron without appearing to do so that he was interested in a sporting goods house in New Haven, that he had been in Hartford on business and that, having nothing better to do today, he had decided to run over to North Lebron and see the game between Musket Hill and Parkinson. "I fancy you're a Parkinson fellow?" he said questioningly. And when Myron acknowledged the fact: "A fine school, I've heard. I've never been there. Warne's off my territory. I've been thinking, though, that some day I'd run over and see if I could do any business there. I suppose you chaps buy most of your athletic supplies in New York."

"I think so. There's one store in Warne that carries a pretty fair line of goods, though."

"I think I'll have to try your town. Parkinson's rather a big place, isn't it?"

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"We have over five hundred fellows this year."

"Is that so? Why, there ought to be some business there for my house. I suppose you chaps go in for most everything: football, baseball, hockey, tennis? How about track athletics?"

"There's a track team," answered Myron, "but this is my first year and I don't know much about it yet."

"I see." The other looked appraisingly and, Myron thought, even admiringly over his new acquaintance. "I say, you look as if you ought to be playing football yourself, old man. Or is baseball your game?"

"Football, but I'm not on the first. It's hard work breaking in at Parkinson."

"Good guess of mine, wasn't it?" laughed the other. "Thought you had the build for a good football man. I meet a good many of them, you see. How's this team you've got ahead there? Going to lick Musket Hill this afternoon?"

"I don't know. I hope so. I have an idea that our coach rather expects a hard game, though. I've heard that Musket Hill is further along than we are."

"Those fellows play good football," said the stranger. "I've seen them in action once or twice. I hope you chaps get away with the game, but my opinion is that you'll have to go some to do it. Got some good men on your team?"

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Myron was quite willing to sing the praises of Parkinson, and during the ensuing half-hour [the stranger was treated to quite a fund of information](#) regarding the school, the football team and Myron Warrenton Foster. Football, though, seemed to interest the tall youth most of all, and several times Myron was turned back to that subject by polite questions. When the train from the south pulled in the two were still conversing and it was but natural that they should share a seat for the remainder of the journey. The stranger could talk interestingly himself and the last part of the trip was occupied with absorbing and even startling adventures met with by him in his business trips. More than once Myron's credulity was severely taxed, but a glance at the narrator's frank and pleasing countenance dispelled all suspicions of mendacity. Myron found this chance acquaintance so interesting that he rather hoped they might witness the game together, but when North Lebron was reached the stranger announced that he had one or two errands to attend to before going up to the field.



The stranger was treated to quite a fund of information

"Maybe I'll run across you there—er—What's the name, by the way?"

"Foster."

"Mine's Millard. I haven't a card with me. Wish I had. But, I say, Foster, if you don't mind I'd like to look you up if I get to Warne. Those little towns are dull holes if you don't know any one in them."

"I wish you would!" said Myron. "You'll find me in 17 Sohmer Hall. Can you remember that?"

"Sohmer, you said? Number 17? I'll remember, Foster. Awfully glad to have met you. It's jolly nice to run across a chap who's—well, a chap who has your own views on things, if you get me." He shook hands cordially, evidently regretfully. "I'll try to find you at the game, old man. If I don't, look for me in your burg before long. I'm going to have a go at that dealer you spoke of."

"I'll try and save a seat for you if you think you're likely to find me," offered Myron.

But the other waved a hand. "Don't bother. I can squeeze in. And I may be rather late in getting there. Good-bye and good luck. Hope you beat 'em!"

That encounter restored both Myron's self-esteem and good humour, and he enjoyed the sandwich and pie and milk which he ate in company with half a hundred other youths at the little lunch-room on the way uptown. Later, wandering by himself through the leaf-strewn streets about the school campus, he came across Joe and Paxton Cantrell, the latter a sturdy, wide-shouldered youth who was playing his second—and last—season at centre. Cantrell left them a minute or two later to speak to an acquaintance and Myron and Joe walked on to the school gymnasium together.

"They fed us at a hotel down there by the station," said Joe sadly, "and I want to tell you that not one of us over-ate. Everything came to us in bird baths and you needed a microscope to find the contents. Norris lost his roast beef and didn't find it until he was through dinner, and where do you suppose it was?"

"In his lap, I guess."

"No, sir, it had slipped under his thumb-nail!"

Myron told of the stranger encountered at the junction and was quite full of his subject, but Joe didn't seem to find it interesting and soon interrupted to point out a building. "What do you suppose that is?" he asked. "Looks like a factory of some sort, don't it? Only it ain't—hasn't got any chimneys, as far as I can see."

"Maybe it's a hospital or something," replied Myron. "He says he's coming to Warne pretty soon and will look me up. I'd like to have you meet him, Joe."

"Who's this?"

"Why, Millard, the chap I was speaking of," answered Myron disgustedly.

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"Oh! Glad to know him. Which street do we take now?"

They parted at the gymnasium and Myron joined the throng pressing toward the field, a short block away. He looked for Millard, but didn't see him. Later, during the intermission, he thought he caught sight of him in the throng behind the Musket Hill bench, but others intervened and he was not able to make certain.

The game started at half-past two, by which time the morning heat had been somewhat abated by a fresh breeze that blew across the oval field and fluttered the big maroon banner above the covered stand that held the Musket Hill rooters. Parkinson's sixty odd supporters, grouped together on the other side of the field, did valiant service with their voices, but to Myron it seemed that their contribution to the din that prevailed as the two teams trotted on together was very slight. He was wedged in between a stout youth named Hollis, whom he instinctively disliked because of his high-pitched voice, and a studious-appearing boy in spectacles whose name he didn't know. Hollis had vindicated Myron's verdict before the teams had finished warming up by showing himself to be one of those cock-sure, opinionated and loud-talking youths of which every school is possessed. His neighbour at his left elbow proved inoffensive and only once during the game uttered any sound that Myron could hear. Then, while every one else was on his feet, shouting and gesticulating, the spectacled youth smiled raptly and murmured, "Oh, bully indeed!"

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Myron purchased a score-card from a boy with a maroon band about his arm, exchanging a bright ten cent piece for a flimsy, smoochy slip of paper that, so far as the visiting team was concerned, was as untruthful as it was unlovely. The card declared that "Mullen" would play left tackle for Parkinson, that "Sawtrell" was her centre and that "Wildram" was the name of her left half-back. Myron corrected these misstatements when Captain Mellen had trotted his warriors out on the field, and some others besides, for Coach Driscoll had sent five substitutes to the fray, four linemen and a back. When Myron had got through making over his score-card it looked like one of his corrected English compositions and read as follows: Stearns, l.e.; Mellen, l.t.; Brodhead, l.g.; Cantrell, c.; Dobbins, r.g.; Flay, r.t.; Grove, r.e.; Cater, q.b.; Brounker, l.h.; Brown, r.h.; Kearns, f.b.

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Myron was glad that Joe was to have his chance in a real game, and for the first period watched his room-mate so closely that the general aspect of the game was quite lost on him and he came to with a start when the teams changed fields, realising that however nicely Joe had played—and he had played well: there was no question about that—the eleven as a whole had failed to show anything resembling real football. While neither team had found its gait, Musket Hill had already threatened the visitors' goal and only a sad fumble had held her away from it. And now, with the second ten-minute period beginning, the ball was again in the Maroon's possession on Parkinson's thirty-three yards. Myron sat up and took notice, deciding to let Joe play his game unaided by telepathic waves from the grandstand!

Musket Hill was a heavy team, although her players got their weight from height rather than breadth. They were, almost without exception, tall, rangy youths with an extremely knowing manner of handling themselves. Myron's brow clouded as he watched that first play after the whistle. Musket Hill used an open formation, with her backs side by side a full pace further distant than usual. From this formation, with the quarter frequently joining the line of backs at left or right, Musket Hill worked a variety of plays: straight plunges at centre, delayed passes sliding off tackle, quarter-back runs, even punts, the latter, thanks to a steady bunch of forwards, never threatened with disaster. The Maroon played a shifty game, changing her plays often, seldom attacking the same place twice no matter what gains might result. Toward the end the latter rule did not hold good, but for three full periods she observed it rigorously, even to the impatience and protests of her supporters. Before that second period was three minutes old she had settled down into her stride and demonstrated the fact that, whatever favours of fortune might occur, on the basis of ability alone she was more than a match for her opponent.

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The Maroon secured her first score less than three minutes from the start of the second quarter as unexpectedly as deftly, and Myron and his companions on the west stand had scarcely recovered from their surprise by the time the goal was kicked! The ball had been on Parkinson's forty-two yards, after Musket Hill had punted, caught again and carried the pigskin four yards in two downs. The Maroon's trick of punting from that three-man formation, and close to the line, had got the enemy worried. The latter was never quite certain when an unexpected kick would go over a back's head, for Musket Hill punted without rule or reason, it seemed. To keep two men up the field at all times was impossible, and so Parkinson compromised and put Brown midway between the line and Cater. As Musket Hill had netted but four yards in two downs, it was fair to assume that she was just as likely to kick on the third down as to rush, and Brown edged further back at Cater's call. But Musket Hill did the unexpected. There was a quick, dazzling movement behind her line and then the ball arched away to her left. Somehow an end was under it when it came down and, although Stearns almost foiled him, caught it and reached the five-yard line before he was seriously challenged by Brodhead. He had kept close to the side-line, and Brown, playing well back, was his nearest foe when the twenty-five-yard line was reached. But Brown never had a chance, for a Musket Hill youth brought him low, while a second effectively disposed of Cater a moment after. Brodhead alone stood for an instant between the Brown and disaster—none ever knew how he had managed to get back to the five yards—and for a heart-beat it seemed that the runner was doomed. But Brodhead's tackle only spun the red-legged runner about and sent him across the final white line like a top in its last gyrations.

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A well-kicked goal added another point to the six, and the teams went back to the centre of the field once more. To Myron it seemed then that Parkinson realised defeat, for there was that in

the attitudes and movements of the players that had not been there before. It was not dejection, but it might have been called the ghost of it. And yet for the remainder of the period Parkinson took and held the upper hand and the half ended with the ball in her possession on her forty-eight yards.

Myron wanted to talk over the game very badly, but the youth with spectacles was doing what appeared to be an intricate problem in algebra on the back of his score-card, while as for the stout boy on his other side, he had heard enough of his conversation already. Just now he was knowingly informing his companion that the trouble with Parkinson was that she needed a decent coach. His brief glimpse of Millard—if it really was Millard—distracted him for a moment or two, and after that he listened to the joyful sounds from the Musket Hill side and felt rather disappointed and lonesome.

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CHAPTER XVIII

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MYRON GETS HIS CHANCE

I should like to tell how Parkinson found herself in the last half of the game and won the contest. But nothing of that sort happened. Coach Driscoll started the third period with all his regulars in the line, and, in consequence, Musket Hill found slower going. Gains in the line were far less frequent, and only outside of tackles was the Maroon likely to win territory. But the home team clearly out-punted the visitors, although, in the final period, Garrison was pulled back from the line to swing his toe for Parkinson. Musket Hill made but one long advance in the last twenty minutes, and, as before, a forward pass was the method chosen. Keene, who had taken Stearns' place at left end, was caught napping badly, and Meldrum, the left half, who should have seen the signs and been on guard, found himself tied up with the enemy. The result was a fine thirty-seven yard gain that placed the pigskin on Parkinson's nine yards.

From a Parkinson point of view, the most encouraging feature of the day developed then when the Brown line, forced back to its six yards and then to its four, and finally retired to its two for being off-side, stood firm and took the ball away a foot from her goal-line. It was then that the west stand shouted and cheered and that Myron, silent a moment for want of breath, heard his spectacled neighbour give vent to the enthusiastic remark already recorded. But no team can win who can't score, and Parkinson couldn't score. On attack she was decidedly weak. The ability was there, but the team had not yet learned to make use of it. Individually, nearly every fellow in the Brown line played really excellent football, but teamwork was missing. For a brief four or five minutes at the beginning of the last quarter there came a semblance of it, and Parkinson, securing the ball on a punt near her thirty yards, managed to work it down to the enemy's thirty. Guy Brown was the bright particular star, and, aided by Meldrum, tore off gain after gain through a weakened left side of the enemy's ranks. But when Musket Hill brought in two substitutes to bolster the point of attack the advance petered out, and when Brown had twice failed to gain and Kearns had lost a yard on a wide end run, Parkinson was forced to punt. That punt marked the end of Parkinson's defiance. From then on she plugged away doggedly to avert a worse defeat and, aided by the over-zealousness of Musket Hill's several substitutes and by the sharp-eyed officials, succeeded. When the final whistle blew Parkinson was down on her twelve yards, her back again to the wall, and only that whistle saved her.

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Musket Hill appeared more than satisfied with her score of 7 to 0. It was only her second victory over Parkinson in many years of contest, although there had been ties and close scores, and Myron, standing in his place with the other Parkinsonians and cheering bravely, witnessed a hilarious celebration as Musket Hill overflowed the field and began a sinuous snake-dance from side to side and from goal to goal. Then came a hurried scramble for the four-forty-eight train and a tedious and, for his part, dejected journey back to Warne. He hoped that Millard would show up, although that engaging youth hadn't spoken of returning by that train. He didn't, however, and Myron had a dull time of it.

The next afternoon, being Sunday, he and Joe visited Andrew Merriman, and later they rescued Zephaniah from his box-stall and, accompanied by that joyous companion, took a long walk into the country. The afternoon was ideal, although too warm for brisk walking. Andrew spied some butternut trees up a lane and they prospected. But the nuts were still green, for no hard frosts had visited them yet. The boys found a sunny spot nearby and stretched themselves out on a bank of ferns and Zephaniah had a monstrous adventure with a cricket and got tangled in a blackberry vine and fell off a stone wall and, in short, spent the most glorious hour of his young life.

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Andrew and Joe did most of the talking that afternoon. Myron was in a rather gloomy frame of mind, although he couldn't have found any explanation for the fact. Andrew rallied him once on the score of his silence, and Myron said he was tired. After that he really thought he was. Joe was in high spirits. He had been pitted against a worthy adversary yesterday and, during the time he had faced him, had had a glorious time. Every one said that he had outplayed his opponent, and Joe knew it. He regretted that Mr. Driscoll had seen fit to put Garrison in his place in the last half, however, earnestly assuring Andrew and Myron that if he had stayed in he would have had "that guy Fraser eating out of my hand in the last quarter!" But a good tussle always cheered Joe up wonderfully, and the effects of that strenuous twenty minutes lasted him for several days: just as a fine big vari-coloured lump under his left eye did!

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When Myron returned to Sohmer at dusk he found a scrawled note from Chas Cummins. "No one home!" he read. "Looked for you on the train coming back, but couldn't find you. What do you know about us? Looks like Fortune favours the brave and all that sort of thing, doesn't it? Watch for developments tomorrow! Yours, C.C."

Myron found the note somewhat cryptic. For a minute he thought of going around to see Chas in the evening, but then he decided that if Chas had wanted to see him he would have said so. As a result, he stayed at home and did some much-needed studying.

Monday afternoon found a number of the regulars absent from practice. The game on Saturday had been a strenuous one and several of the players had earned a rest. Chas was on hand, however, although not in togs, and the same was true of Jud Mellen. Cantrell and Garrison and Cater were absent, and one or two others, and the first squad had a sort of shot-to-pieces look. Dummy practice started the proceedings, and, since much poor tackling had been shown in the Musket Hill contest, the drill was a long one. It seemed to Myron that every one had nerves today, from Coach Driscoll down to the last and least important substitute. Manager Farnsworth, pulling the rope that shot the canvas dummy across the trolley, was short of speech and jerky of manner, Jud Mellen, watching grimly from beside the freshly-spaded pit, frowned and twisted his hands about in his uprolled sweater and made biting comments, and even Billy Goode, normally sweet-tempered as a cherub, looked and spoke as if some one had been casting aspersions on Ireland! Only Chas, grinning like a catfish, appeared unaffected by the general epidemic. Chas joked and jollied and got himself thoroughly hated by all.

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Back on the gridiron, Coach Driscoll called Myron from the bench and fixed him with a calculating eye. Myron had visions of clearing out his locker and retiring from football affairs. But what the coach said was: "Cummins tells me he had you at full-back the other day. Ever played there?"

"No, sir, not until Friday."

"You're a half, aren't you? Well, we've got plenty of those, such as they are. Think you could learn full-back? Ever done any punting?"

"Some, yes, sir."

"Get a ball and show me."

Over on the second gridiron, with a substitute back to catch or chase, Myron swung his foot and dropped the ball and saw it go off at a tangent, and heard the coach say: "Take your time, Foster; you've got all day." When the back had relayed the pigskin from the first team gridiron and Myron had it again in his hands he decided to try to forget that the coach was watching. The result was much better, for the ball went straight toward the other goal and into the waiting arms of the back. The punt wasn't long, but it had been true, and Mr. Driscoll nodded hopefully.

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"Try it again," he ordered, "and hold your leg straighter. Lock your knee and keep it so."

After the next attempt he called down the field. "Where did you catch that, Morton?" he asked. The back turned and counted the lines.

"About the forty, sir," he shouted.

"Not bad," commented the coach. "We're on the twenty-five here. Try a low one now. And follow through with your foot. Don't stop when you strike the ball: keep your foot going right on up: there's plenty of room for it!"

Four more punts, varying in distance from a wretched twenty yards to a glorious forty-five, followed, Myron seeking to profit by the coach's instructions. Then: "I guess that's enough, Foster," said Mr. Driscoll. "You'll stand a lot of practice, but you've got a good swing and I wouldn't be surprised if you could make a pretty fair punter. I'll give you a chance to show what you can do at full-back. If you buckle down and try hard you'll stand a chance of a place, for we need another man there. Wish you had about ten more pounds on you, though. Go around with Warren's squad over there for a while and watch how Houghton does it. I'll see you again."

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Blanket-wrapped, for Billy Goode had sharp eyes for his charges and the weather had turned colder overnight, Myron followed the first team substitutes in their signal practice for a good twenty minutes. Now and then he caught Chas Cummins' eye as the squad trotted by, but that youth's expression was blank and innocent. Finally the benches filled again, coach and captain and manager compared notes like three gentleman burglars meditating a midnight sortie, the trainer busied himself with blankets and the sparse audience on the stand kicked their feet against the boards to put warmth into them. Then Mr. Driscoll faced the benches.

"First and second squads," he called. "First will kick off. Second, take this goal. Who's playing right half for the second? You, Robbins? Well, we want you on the first. Morton, you go to the second. All right now? What's that, Grove? Left tackle? Oh, all right. Simkins! Go in on the first: left tackle. All right, Hersey! Start it up!"

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Myron wondered if the coach had forgotten his promise, for Williams was playing full-back on the first squad and Houghton on the second and he, Myron, was adorning the bench with some twenty-odd other subs. Perhaps Mr. Driscoll had changed his mind, thought Myron. At that moment Chas called to him and led him down the side-line a ways. "Drop your blanket, old chap," he said. "Coach says I'm to pass you a few, though I'm blessed if I know how he expects me to work in a pair of trousers that are two inches too small for me! Get over there by the end of the stand. If you miss them you won't have to chase them so far. Now then, perhaps you know that in the modern game of football, the full-back is called on to take the snap-back straight from the

centre on numerous occasions. Well, I'm the gentlemanly centre for the nonce. That's a bully word, 'nonce.' Now we will suppose"—Chas' voice diminished to a murmur as he turned his back and placed the ball he had brought on the sod before him. Myron spread his hands as he had seen Houghton do, Chas cast a backward glance at him and swept the ball toward him. By leaping two feet off the earth Myron was just able to tip it with his fingers. Chas laughed delightedly.

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"Gee, that's just like Cantrell does it!" he exulted. "In fact, I believe I got it two or three inches higher than he ever did. Guess I'll get Driscoll to let me play centre!"

Myron recovered the ball and tossed it back. "Maybe I'd better get a soap-box or something to stand on," he suggested.

"None of your lip, my lad! Watch your step, now!"

This time the ball came straight and shoulder high, and Myron caught it, shifted it to the crook of his left arm and dived forward. "Splendidly done, old chap!" applauded Chas. "Quite professional. Any one can play full-back if he has a good centre like me to pass to him, though. Now, then, here we go again!"

Chas kept it up until he was red in the face from stooping and Myron was tired of it, and only stopped, as he said, because he had heard a suspicious ripping sound in the neighbourhood of his waist. "It's all right," he explained a trifle breathlessly, "to die for your school, but no one wants to bust his trousers for it!"

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On the way back to the bench Myron said: "What did you mean in your note about Fortune, Cummins? I didn't get that. Sorry I was out, by the way."

"I meant that things were coming our way, old chap. Didn't you observe what a mess of things Steve Kearns made Saturday?"

"Not especially. I guess I wasn't watching Kearns much."

"And you grooming for his place! What do you know about you? Well, poor old Steve balled up everything he tried. Every time he got the ball he lost a yard. If they'd turned him around he'd have won the game for us! Between you and me and the bucket there, Foster, you've got the chance of a life-time to land on all four feet right square behind the first team. All you've got to do is show horse-sense, old chap, and be willing to learn. By the way, you got off a couple of nice punts over there."

"I don't see, though, why I couldn't have had a show at half," said Myron dubiously. "I don't know enough about playing full-back, Cummins. I may make an awful mess of it."

"If you do," was the grim reply, "I'll knock the feathers off you. But you won't. You mustn't. Doggone it, son, this is your big chance! You've just got to make good! Remember there's another year coming!"

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"I'll try, of course, Cummins, but——"

"But me no buts! You keep in mind—There's Driscoll calling you. Go to it, old chap!"

"Go in on the second there at full-back, Foster. You know the signals, don't you? All right. Now show something. Warren, give your full-back some work. Come on, first! Get into it! Let's see some playing!"

The whistle piped before Myron had settled into position, however, and he went back to the bench with the rest and listened to criticism and instruction and moistened his throat with water and half wished that Chas Cummins had let him alone. But, back on the field presently, with the ball arching away overhead, he forgot his stage-fright and gripped his nose-guard with his teeth and piled into the play. Warren, acting on instructions, gave him plenty of work, and he didn't do it so badly, all things considered. At least, he made three good gains and he got away two punts, one of which surprised him. On defence he showed up decidedly well, and Warren, an earnest little shock-headed youth, gave him praise more than once. He had some bad moments, as when, ball in hand for a toss to O'Curry across the line, he found himself besieged by two rampant first team forwards who had somehow broken through, and, unable to heave, let himself be forced back many yards. Afterwards, he told himself aggrievedly that Warren had no right to call on him for a forward-pass, that he had never had much of it to do and couldn't be expected to be proficient. Besides, if your line let the whole opposing team through on top of you, what *could* you do, anyway?

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How Coach Driscoll had been impressed, Myron had no means of knowing. The coach made no comments. Myron concluded that he had failed to make good, and he dressed himself and went back to Sohmer in a rather depressed state of mind. But after supper Chas breezed in and relieved him. "Rotten? Nothing of the sort!" declared Chas. "You were positively good, old chap! I'll bet Driscoll is scratching Houghton this minute and writing 'Foster' in his little red book. If you don't find yourself playing full-back again tomorrow I'll—I'll eat my hat. And I need it, too, having none other. You didn't see our young friend, did you, Dobbins?"

"No," answered Joe. "I wasn't out."

"Well, he's the coming marvel. There's no doubt about it. All he's got to do is learn the position."

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Joe and Myron laughed, the former the more merrily. "That sounds sort of like a real job," he commented.

"It isn't, really," answered Chas earnestly. "You see, Foster knows all the moves but he doesn't know where to fit them in. After all, playing football is playing football, whether you're in the line or back of it, Dobbins. I'll bet that, if I had to, I could step into any position on the team tomorrow and get by with it. I don't say I'd be a wonder, but I'd do the trick fairly well. That may sound like conceited guff, but it's a fact, fellows. Foster's played half, and a full-back's only a half with another name and a few different things to do. He'll learn in a week. I've got all my money on him to win. I'm tickled, too. When Foster came to me and asked if I thought he could play full-back —"

"When I *what?*" gasped Myron.

Chas winked and frowned. "When he sprung that on me, Dobbins, I had my doubts. But I said the right thing. I said, 'Go to it, my boy, and good luck to you!' I'm glad I did. We surely need more full-backs than we've got, and I believe Foster's going to be a good one. Well, I'm off. By the way, Dobbins, you played a pretty game Saturday. I'll have to watch my step or you'll have me on the bench. Good night!"

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CHAPTER XIX

DOCTOR LANE INTERVENES

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Chas Cummins proved a good prophet. On the following day Myron slipped into a niche in the first team, one of many hopeful, hard-working youths known as "first team subs." For a few days, indeed, until after the Phillipsburg game, he was dazed by the sudden leap from obscurity to conspicuity, from what he termed neglect to what was extremely like solicitude. Not that his arrival at the field for practice was the occasion for shouts of acclaim and a fanfare of trumpets, for those at the helm did not show their interest in promising candidates in any such manner, but at last he was quite certain that coach and captain, managers and trainer, were aware of his existence. There were times when he heartily wished that they knew less of it. Some one was forever at his elbow, criticising, explaining, exhorting. Coach Driscoll and Ned Garrison oversaw his punting practice, Snow lugged him to remote corners of the playfield to make him catch passes, Katie drilled him in signals, every one, it seemed to Myron, was having a finger in his pie. And when he was not being privately coached, as it were, he was legging it around the gridiron with the substitutes or tumbling about the dummy pit with a bundle of stuffed and dirty canvas clasped to his bosom. Those were busy, confusing days. And yet no one outside the football "inner ring" appeared to be aware of the fact that a new light had arisen in the Parkinson firmament. Not unnaturally, perhaps, Myron looked for signs of interest, even of awe, from his acquaintances, but he found none. At table in dining hall Eldredge still glowered at him, Rogers cringed and the pestiferous Tinkham poked sly fun. Only Joe and Andrew and Chas, among his friends, showed him honour; and Joe as a strewer of blossoms in his path was not an overwhelming success. Joe seemed to think that his chum's leap to incipient fame was pleasing but not remarkable, while Myron was absolutely certain that it was stupendous and unparalleled in the annals of preparatory school football. When you are watched and guided as Myron was by those in command you are likely to think that. He wondered whether Joe was not just a little bit envious. Of course, Joe's position was quite as assured as his own, but Joe had not engaged the time and attention and solicitude of the entire coaching force. He hoped Joe wasn't going to be disagreeable about it.

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Phillipsburg came and went, defeated easily enough, 12 points to 3, and Warne High School followed a week later. High School always put up a good fight against Parkinson, and she made no exception this year. Coach Driscoll used many substitutes that afternoon and so High School found her work easier. Myron had his baptism by fire in the second period and lasted until the end of the third. He was taken out then because High School had tied the score and it was necessary to add another touchdown or field-goal to the home team's side of the ledger. So Kearns, who was still the most dependable full-back in sight, took Myron's place. Kearns gained and lost in his usual way, and had no great part in the securing of the third Parkinson score. Katie was mainly responsible for that, for he sneaked away from the opponent's thirty-two yards and landed the ball on her eight, from whence it was carried over on the fourth down by Brounker. That made the figures 20 to 14, and there they remained for the rest of the contest.

Myron was huffy about being removed and every one who spoke to him discovered the fact. Of course, he was huffy in a perfectly gentlemanly way. He didn't scold and he didn't sneer, but he indulged in irony and intimated that if football affairs continued to be managed as they had been that afternoon he would refuse to be held responsible if the season ended in defeat. Oddly enough, no one appeared panic-stricken at the veiled threat. Joe grinned, until Myron looked haughty and insulted, and then became grave and spoke his mind. He had an annoying way of doing that, to Myron's way of thinking.

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"Kiddo," said Joe, on this occasion, "if I was you I'd let Driscoll and Mellen run things their own way. Maybe their way don't always look good to you, but you aren't in possession of all the—the facts, so to speak. When they put in Kearns today they had a reason, believe me, Brother. You attend to your knitting and let theirs alone. If they drop a stitch, it's their funeral, not yours. You've got just about all you can do to beat Kearns and Williams for full-back's position—"

"I'm ahead of Williams right now," said Myron with asperity.

"All right, kiddo; you stay there. Don't get highfaluting and swell-headed. Just as soon as you do you'll quit playing your best and Williams'll slip past you. Take an old man's advice, Brother."

"I wish you'd stop that 'Brother,'" said Myron pettishly. "I'm not your brother. And I'm not swell-headed, either. And I don't try to tell Driscoll how to run the team. Only, when I know my own—my own capabilities I naturally think something's sort of funny when things happen like what happened today!"

"Lots of funny things happen that we can't account for in this world," remarked Joe philosophically as he bent over his book again. "Best thing to do is let 'em happen."

"Oh, rats!" muttered the other.

It was about this time that Myron began to have fallings-out with Old Addie. Old Addie—he wasn't phenomenally old, by any means, but he seemed old in a faculty composed of young or youngish men—was well-liked, and kindly and just to a fault. But he had views on the importance of Greek and Latin not held by all members of his classes. He believed that Herodotus was the greatest man who ever lived and Horace the greatest poet, and held that an acquaintance with the writings of these and other departed masters was an essential part of every person's education. Many disagreed with him. Those who disagreed and kept the fact to themselves got on very nicely. Those who were so misguided as to disagree and say so earned his pitying contempt; although contempt is perhaps too strong a word. Myron in a rash moment confessed that Latin didn't interest him. He had to think up on the spur of the moment some plausible excuse for being illy prepared, and that excuse seemed handy. The result was unfortunate. There was a meeting in Mr. Addicks' study in the evening, a meeting that lasted for an hour and a quarter and that included readings from the Latin poets, essayists and historians, sometimes in translation, more often in the original. Myron, bored to tears, at last capitulated. He owned that Latin was indeed a beautiful language, that Livy was a wonder, Cicero a peach and Horace a corker. He didn't use just those terms, but that's a detail. Mr. Addicks, suspicious of the sudden conversion, pledged him to a reformation in the matter of study and freed him.

But the conversion was not real and Old Addie soon developed a most embarrassing habit of calling on Myron in class. Myron called it "picking on me." Whatever it was called, it usually resulted disastrously to Myron's pretences of having studied in the manner agreed on. Old Addie waxed sarcastic, Myron assumed a haughty, contemptuous air. They became antagonistic and trouble brewed. Myron didn't have enough time to do justice to all his courses, he declared to Joe, and since Latin was the least liked and the most troublesome it was Latin that suffered. There is no doubt that two and a half hours—often more—of football leaves a chap more inclined for bed than study. Not infrequently Myron went to sleep with his head on a book and had to be forcibly wrested from slumber by Joe at ten o'clock or thereabouts. So matters stood at the end of Myron's first fortnight of what might be called intensive football training. So, in fact, they continued to stand, with slight changes, to the morning of the day on which Parkinson played Day and Robins School.

The team was to travel away from home for that contest and Myron was to go with it, not as a spectator, but as a useful member of the force. He did not go, however. At chapel his name was among a list of seven others recited by the Principal, and at eleven he was admitted to the inner sanctum, behind the room in which he had, a month and a half ago, held converse with Mr. Morgan. This time it was "Jud" himself who received him. The Principal's real name was Judson, but at some earlier time in his incumbency of the office he had been dubbed Jud, and in spite of the possible likelihood of getting him confused with the captain of the football team, he was still so called. Doctor Lane taught English, but his courses were advanced and Myron had not reached them. In consequence he knew very little of Jud; much less than Jud knew of him; and he felt a certain amount of awe as he took the indicated chair at the left of the big mahogany desk. The Doctor didn't beat about the bush any to speak of. He advanced at once to the matter in hand, which appeared to be: Why wasn't Myron keeping up in Latin?

Myron said he thought it must be because he didn't have time enough to study it. He said it was his firm belief that he was taking too many courses. He thought that it would be better if he was allowed to drop one course, preferably Latin, until the next term. Doctor Lane smiled wanly and wanted to know if Myron was quite sure that he was making the most of what time he had. Myron said he thought he was. He didn't say it very convincingly, however. Doctor Lane inquired how much time each day was devoted to Latin. Myron didn't seem to have a very clear impression; perhaps, though, an hour. Jud delved into the boy's daily life and elicited the fact that something like two and a half hours were devoted to learning to play full-back and something less than three to learning his lessons. Presented as Jud presented it, the fact didn't look attractive even to Myron. He felt dimly that something was wrong. He attempted to better his statement by explaining that very often he studied between hours—a little. Doctor Lane was not impressed. He twiddled a card that appeared to hold a record of Myron's scholastic career for a moment and then pronounced a verdict.

"Foster, as I diagnose your case, you are too much interested in football and not sufficiently in your studies. Also, football is claiming too much of your time. Football is a splendid game and a beneficent form of exercise, but it is not the—what I may call the chief industry here, Foster. We try to do other things besides play football. Perhaps you have lost sight of that fact."

Jud let that sink in for a moment and returned the card to its place in an indexed cabinet, closing the drawer with a decisive *bang* that made Myron jump.

"So," continued the Principal drily, "I think it will be best if you detach yourself from football

interests for—for awhile, Foster.”

Silence ensued. Myron gulped. Then he asked in a small voice: “How long, sir?”

“Oh, we won’t decide that now.” Jud’s voice and manner struck Myron as being far too bright and flippant. “We’ll see how it works out. I’ve known it to work very nicely in many cases. I shall expect to hear better—much better—accounts of you from Mr. Addicks, Foster. Good morning.”

And that is why Myron didn’t go bowling off to the station with the rest of the team, and why Kearns and Houghton played the full-back position that afternoon, and why, after a miserable six hours spent in mooning about a deserted campus and a lonely room, Myron packed a suit-case with a few of his yellow-hued shirts and similar necessities and unobtrusively made his way to Maple Street in the early gloom of the October evening.

CHAPTER XX

ANDY TAKES A JOURNEY

At a few minutes past eight that evening Joe clattered hurriedly up the stairs of the house in Mill Street and thumped imperatively at Andrew’s door. Just why he thumped didn’t appear, since he threw the door open without waiting for permission. Andrew looked up inquiringly from his book in the yellow radius of light around the table.

“Hello,” he greeted. “Slide under the bed and maybe they won’t find you.”

“It’s that idiot, Myron,” announced Joe breathlessly, and sank into a chair.

“What’s he done now?” asked Andrew interestedly.

“Bolted!”

“Bolted?”

“Beat it—vamoosed—lit out—gone!”

“Where? What for?”

“I don’t know where, but he’s gone. I suppose he’s headed home. He’s in wrong at the Office over Latin, and this morning Doc Lane told him to quit football. He was to have gone along with us to play Day and Robins, you know, and was all keyed up about it. I didn’t get many of the details: only saw him for about three minutes just before we left: but he was talking then about firing himself and hiring out to Kenwood for the rest of the year.”

Andrew frowned. “A sweet thought,” he murmured sarcastically.

“Oh, he wouldn’t do it,” said Joe. “He likes to talk like that, but he’s all right behind his mouth.”

“I hope so. Where—when did he go?”

“Search me. I know he was gone when I got back at six, or a little before. I thought, of course, that he was around somewhere; probably at Alumni. But he wasn’t at dinner and he didn’t show up afterwards, and I remembered his line of talk this morning and got to snooping around and found his suit-case gone and some of his things; brushes and sponge and the like of those.”

“Maybe he got leave to go home over Sunday.”

“I thought of that and found out from Mr. Hoyt. Had to be careful so he wouldn’t get suspicious, but I got away with it, I guess. He hasn’t asked for leave; and wouldn’t have got it anyway, I guess. No, he’s just plain beat it.”

Andrew whistled softly and expressively.

“That fixes him,” he said regretfully. “On top of probation——”

“That’s the point,” urged Joe. “He’s dished for fair if faculty gets wind of it. That’s why I came. I can’t go. I asked Driscoll and he said nothing doing. So it’s up to you, Andy.”

“Up to me? Go? Where?”

“Go after him and bring him back,” answered Joe. “I looked up trains. He probably waited until after dark, because he wouldn’t have risked being seen with a suit-case, and if he did he must have taken the six-eighteen for New York. There’s no train for Port Foster out of Philadelphia until seven-twelve tomorrow morning. He might stay in New York overnight or go on to Philadelphia, so the best way’ll be to go right through to Philadelphia and watch the Port Foster trains.”

Andrew stared amazedly. “Look here, Joe,” he said, “are you suggesting that I go to Philadelphia after Myron?”

“Sure,” answered Joe impatiently. “What did you suppose? And you’ll have to get a hustle on, too: it’s about eight-fifteen now and your train goes at nine-five. I’d go in a minute, but I’m in training and the rule’s strict, and if I got caught—fare thee well!”

To Joe’s surprise, Andrew began to laugh. “Well, you’re a wonder, Joe,” he gasped. “Why, man alive, I can’t go traipsing all over the United States like that! I’m beastly sorry for Myron, but

—

"Why can't you?" demanded Joe, scowling. "Some one's got to, and that's flat. If he's caught away from school without permission they'll chuck him as sure as shooting. Why do you say you can't go, Andy?"

"Why—why, for one reason, I can't afford it, you idiot! How much do you think it'll cost to go to Philadelphia and back? I'm no millionaire! Why——"

"I thought of that." Joe pulled a roll of bills from his trousers pocket and flung it on the table. "There's twenty-five, all I have right now. It's enough, I guess."

Andrew stared at the money in surprise. "Well—but—look here, I've got an engagement in the morning. And how do you know I can get leave?"

"Take it! No one'll know you're away," said Joe. "Gosh, we've got to risk something!"

"We have? You mean I have, don't you?"

"Oh, what's the difference? Myron's a friend, ain't he, and we can't let him go and kill himself off like this without making a try, can we? Besides, the team needs him bad. If he'd hung on a bit longer he'd have been full-back and—and everything! I—I'd like to wring his silly neck!" [240]

Andrew smiled. Then he stared thoughtfully at the table. At last he seized the roll of money, thrust it in his pocket and pushed back his chair. "Guess you're right, Joe," he said. "What time did you say the train goes?"

"Nine-five." Joe jerked out his watch. "You've got forty minutes. Better pack a toothbrush and a night-shirt, kiddo."

"Pack nothing," replied Andrew. "A toothbrush and a comb will see me through, and those go in my pocket. I want that brown book, though, and some sheets of paper. Better have my fountain pen, too. You'll have to take a message to Wynant, 29 Williams, for me, Joe. Better do it tonight. Tell him I'm called away and can't be around in the morning. I'll see him when I get back. Now, what about the dogs? Mind coming around in the morning and letting them out and feeding them? Good! We're off, then."

Andrew turned out the light and they fumbled their way to the door. Outside, Andrew gave the key to Joe. "Don't forget the dogs, Joe," he reminded. "Now, then, tell me again about these trains. It's Philadelphia I'm going to, is it?" [241]

Joe explained carefully as they hurried through the illy-lighted streets toward the station. "Better get to Philadelphia by the first train you can make, Andy. You can sleep on the way, some. The first Sunday train for Port Foster leaves Philadelphia at twelve minutes past seven. There isn't another until ten-something. He may wait for that. You'll have to watch for him on the platform. For the love of mud, Andy, don't miss him!"

"I won't!" answered the other grimly as they entered the station. "Wait here a minute. I'm going to call up the Office."

"The Office!" exclaimed Joe aghast. "What for?"

"To get permission."

"But——"

"I know. I won't. Here, you buy the ticket. Get it to Philadelphia and return if you can. I'll be right with you."

Andrew was as good as his word. Joe viewed him anxiously. "Did you get it?" he asked.

Andrew nodded. "Yes. I told Mr. Hoyt I had to be away overnight on important matters. He hemmed a bit at first, but finally came around. So that's all right. I feel rather better for having faculty's blessing, Joe." Ten minutes later the long train rolled in and Andrew climbed aboard. He was going into a day coach, but Joe pulled him back and hurried him down the platform, past a hundred lighted windows and hustled him into a parlour-car. "Might as well be as comfortable as you can," he explained. "You can get a pretty fair nap in one of those chairs if you don't mind waking up with a broken neck! Good-bye and good luck, Andy!" [242]

"Good-bye. See you tomorrow afternoon or evening. Don't forget Tess and the puppies!"

Then the train pulled out and Joe heaved a sigh of relief and made his way back to the campus and Williams Hall and the indignant Mr. Wynant.

About the same time Coach Driscoll and Captain Mellen were talking things over in the former's lodgings. Parkinson had played smooth, hard football that afternoon, bringing encouragement to both, and their countenances still reflected satisfaction. "Looks as though we had struck our gait at last, Cap," said Mr. Driscoll, puffing comfortably at his pipe.

"It does look so," agreed Jud. "It's time, too, with only two more games before Kenwood."

"Well, I'd rather see a team come slowly and not reach the peak too early in the season. I'm more afraid of slumps than the smallpox, Mellen. Remember year before last's experience?" [243]

Jud nodded. "If we can hold it where it is, Coach, we'll be all right, I guess. Some of the fellows certainly played themselves proud today: Keith and Meldrum and Norris——"

"And Mellen," suggested Mr. Driscoll, smiling through the smoke.

"I guess I didn't do so badly," Jud allowed. "But that Dobbins was the corker, when you come

right down to brass tacks, don't you think so?"

"Dobbins played as remarkable a game as I've seen in a long, long time," was the reply. "The way he opened holes in the D. and R. line was pretty. They weren't holes, either, they were—were nice, broad boulevards! A stick of dynamite wouldn't have made more of a mess of their centre!"

"And he's all there on defence, too," said Jud. "Steady as a concrete wall. He and Keith work like twins."

"Pretty," agreed Mr. Driscoll. "I guess there's no question as to who'll play right guard against Kenwood. I wish, though, I knew who was going to play full-back." Mr. Driscoll frowned. "You're sure Foster's out of it?"

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"Fairly. I only know what you know. I haven't seen him. I'm not surprised, though. He was beginning to show a good deal of side and you know yourself that when a fellow gets his head swelled he comes a cropper one way or another."

"I know. Still, we mustn't be too hard on the boy, for we've paid him a good deal of attention and that's likely to turn a chap's head unless it's screwed on pretty tightly. And we've worked him hard, too. Maybe he hasn't had time to do enough studying."

"Well, he's out of it, anyway. It's hard luck, for I thought he was coming along finely. I guess it will have to be Kearns, after all."

The coach nodded. "I haven't lost hope of Kearns yet, Cap. He's got it in him to play good football. I was wondering, though, if we could spare Brounker for the position. He's a good half, but we may not need him there, and perhaps with some coaching between now and three weeks from now he'd be better than Kearns."

"I suppose there's a chance of Foster getting clear before the Kenwood game," said Jud doubtfully, "but he wouldn't be much use to us."

"Mighty little," replied the coach. "Of course, if he was off only a week it would be different. In that case we could take him back and have him handy in case Kearns went bad. But I don't know —"

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"I guess I'd better see him in the morning and find out what the prospects are. If he will saw wood and get rid of his conditions, or whatever his trouble is, by a week from Monday—"

"Yes, tell him that. Brow-beat him a bit. Get him on his mettle. I'll see him, if you think it would be better."

"I'll take a fall out of him first," said Jud. "By the way, he and Dobbins room together. It might be a good scheme to get Dobbins after him. I guess they're pretty close from what I hear, and maybe he'd listen to Dobbins when he wouldn't to me. Well, anyway, I think we can lick Kenwood this year even without a full-back," he ended.

Mr. Driscoll smiled and shook his head. "Let's not be too sure, Mellen," he said. "Wait until the Sunday papers come. Six to six sounds pretty good for Phillipsburg, but we don't know yet how many of her subs Kenwood used. That coach of hers is a foxy chap, and it may be that he was satisfied to get away with a tie and leave us guessing. Perhaps he thought we had scouts over there today, looking them over."

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"I sort of wish we had had," said Jud. "Oh, I know your idea on the subject, Coach, and I'm not saying you aren't right, but, just the same, it's a handicap. Kenwood sends fellows to watch our playing and gets lots of useful information, I'll bet, and we have to depend on what the papers tell us. And most of that guff is written by fellows friendly to Kenwood. If the Kenwood coach wants the news to go out that the team is rotten, it goes out, and we have to swallow it. I'd give a hundred dollars to see her play Montrose next Saturday!"

"That's high pay for acting the spy," replied the coach gravely. "See here, Jud Mellen, you're a fair and square, decent sort, from all I've seen of you, and I've known you for three years. You wouldn't pick a pocket or lie, and I've never yet seen you doing any dirty work in a game. Then just how would you explain it to your conscience if you went over to Kenwood next Saturday with the idea of seeing how much information you could get hold of regarding Kenwood's plays and signals and so on?"

"But, gosh ding it, Mr. Driscoll, I wouldn't wear a false moustache and all that! I wouldn't sneak in, I'd go openly. There's no reason why I shouldn't see Kenwood play a game of football just because I happen to play with Parkinson!"

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"Not if just being entertained was what you were there for, Cap," answered the other. "But it wouldn't be. You'd be a spy, and you know it, old son. That's what I object to. When the time comes that it is an understood and mutually agreed on thing that members of one football team are welcome to see another team play, why, then I won't make a yip. But you know how we love to get word here from the gate that a Kenwood scout has gone in! We cut out new plays and try to look worse than we are."

"You mean we would if you'd let us," laughed Jud.

"You do it, anyhow," said the coach, smiling. "I've watched you too often. The last time we had visitors I asked Cater why he didn't use a certain play in front of the other fellow's goal and get a score and he looked innocent and said he'd forgot it. No, we'll get along without that sort of stuff, Mellen, while I'm here. I don't like it a bit."

"Well, I said you were right," Jud laughed. "I just had to have my little kick. Hello, nearly ten! I

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must leg it. I'll see Foster in the morning; Dobbins, too; and let you know what I learn. Good night, Coach."

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CHAPTER XXI

AN EARLY MORNING CALL

But Jud didn't see Myron in the morning, for the reason that we know of. Only Joe was in Number 17 when the football captain knocked, and Joe was not telling all he knew. According to him, Foster was "out just now" and the time of his return was most uncertain. Joe "had an idea" that his friend was dining away from school. Jud said that it didn't matter much and that he'd see Foster later. Then:

"Maybe you know how bad he's fixed with the Office, Whoa?" he suggested.

"I don't," replied Joe, "for he hasn't said much to me about it. I know that it's Latin that's troubling him, though. He's been in wrong with Addicks for a couple of weeks. Fact is, Cap, Myron hasn't been putting in enough time on study. He falls to sleep at the table there about every other night. Guess he's been getting a bit too much exercise."

"Yes, we've worked him pretty steadily. Too bad, for, between you and me, he was doing mighty well and looked awfully good. I wonder if you can't find out what the prospects are, Whoa, and let me know. If he could get a clean slate by a week from Monday, say, he might still be of some use to the team. He probably wouldn't start the Kenwood game, but it's a fair bet he'd get in for part of it. Driscoll and I were talking about him last night, and I said I thought that maybe you could sort of jack him up; make him see that it is up to him to get square with the Office and get back to the team."

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"Oh, I'll get him back if it can be done," Joe assured him. "I was going to, anyway. We need him, Cap."

"We certainly do, Whoa. See what you can do with him. Wouldn't some tutoring help? There's a chap named Merriman in town who's a regular whale at it."

"I know him. I'll have a talk with Myron when he comes back—in, I mean—and let you know, Cap. You leave him to me!"

Jud Mellen had no more than got out of the building when a fearsome knock came at the door and Chas Cummins appeared, scowling ferociously. "Hello," he said. "Where's Foster?"

"Out just now," replied Joe affably. "Want to leave a message?"

"No—yes—Yes, tell him I say he's to beat it over to my room the minute he shows up here!"

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"All right," said Joe.

Chas clung to the doorknob and continued to scowl, and studied Joe speculatively. Finally: "Isn't it a mess?" he demanded. "Everything going like clock-work, and then, bingo—Officer, call the ambulance! Honest, Whoa, I could kick Foster from here to New York and back cheerfully, drat his hide!"

"I wish you could kick him back," said Joe.

"What do you mean?"

"Close the door, will you? Thanks. Can you keep a secret, Chas?"

"Sometimes. Go on. What's up?"

"Myron's gone. Went last evening."

"*Fired?*"

"No, he just went."

"Left school, you mean? Well, what—do you know—about that?"

"We're trying to get him back before faculty gets on to it, but it doesn't look good. Merriman's on his trail. Took the nine o'clock train last night. I think he'll manage to head him off all right, but Myron's a cranky, stubborn dog and may refuse to come back."

"Any one suspect so far?" asked Chas with knitted brows.

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"Don't think so. Good thing there's no chapel on Sunday, isn't it?"

"Merry Andrew went, you say? Good stuff! If any one can do the persuasion stunt, Andy can. Hang the beggar, what's he think, anyhow? Doesn't he know he will get fired if faculty hears about it? And what about me?"

"You?" asked Joe.

"Well, I mean the team," corrected Chas hurriedly. "He ought to be licked! I'd do it, too, if it would do any good. Honest, Whoa, isn't this the very limit?"

"Way past it," agreed Joe. "He's a crazy guy for sure."

"When do you expect Andy back?" asked Chas after a moment.

"He might make it by the five o'clock. Ought to be here by eight, anyway."

"Well, if he doesn't fetch him it'll be good-bye to Foster for keeps! What's wrong with him, anyway? Some one said he was on pro."

"Don't know whether it's out and out probation or not," said Joe. "Didn't have much time to talk to him. But he said Doc Lane told him to let football alone and get hunky with Addicks again."

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"Latin, eh? I always said that language ought to be prohibited! It's always getting folks into trouble. Well, I suppose there isn't anything I can do. I wish you'd let me know the news when there is any, Whoa."

"I will. Keep this quiet, though, Chas. You and Andy and I are the only ones who know, and it mustn't get any further. I only told you because you and Myron have some game on and I knew you'd keep quiet."

"Some game on? What makes you think that?" asked Chas.

"Well, I've got eyes and ears," answered the other drily. "I'm not asking questions, though. So long. I'll let you know how it comes out."

"Don't forget. If I'm out leave word with Brown. Just say 'Yes' or 'No.' I'll understand. Gosh, I hope Andy fetches him, though!"

Myron reached New York at a few minutes after ten on Saturday night. He had some supper on the way, crushed into a corner of a crowded dining-car, but he wasn't hungry and ate little. On arrival, quick work in a taxi-cab got him across town in time for a train to Philadelphia that landed him there just before midnight. He had a married cousin living in that city, but he preferred to go to the quiet little hotel at which his mother stayed when on shopping visits. He left an order to be called at half-past six, luxuriated in a bath and crawled wearily to bed. But sleep was still a long way from him, and until after two he lay there wide-eyed and thought and thought, and twisted and turned.

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There may be more dismal places in the world than Philadelphia at six-thirty on a rainy morning. If so, Myron had fortunately escaped them. He had left himself barely enough time to dress and reach the station for the seven-twelve express, and when, aroused by the blatant *buz-z-zz* of the telephone, he staggered to the window and looked out, he felt that he never could do it. That drab, empty stretch of wet street was the last blow to waning courage. Had he rested well and felt normally fresh he would have charged at his clothes, leaped into a cab and made it nicely, but he was in no condition of mind or body for such hustling methods. Besides, there were later trains, and he was in no hurry to face his folks, and the tumbled bed looked awfully good to him. Three minutes later he was asleep again.

Meanwhile Andrew Merriman was slowly pacing the platform beside the seven-twelve train. He had been there ever since the train had rolled sleepily into the long, gloomy shed. Keeping tabs on the passengers was no difficult task, for they were few in number and moved with dragging feet. Andrew had arrived in Philadelphia at half-past five, after an interminable ride during which he had huddled himself into a seat in a day-coach and slumbered fitfully between stops. It had been a glorious relief to leave that leisurely train and stretch his legs again. He had had breakfast at a nearby lunch-room, and now, all things considered, was feeling very fit. A glance at his watch showed the time to be two minutes to seven. In fourteen minutes from now he would know his fate. He had already arranged his plans in the event that Myron didn't show up for that train, and he would have three hours in which to carry them out. A portly man with two suit-cases waddled down the long platform and puffed himself up the steps of a car. Even allowing for a disguise, thought Andrew whimsically, that was not Myron. Nor was the next passenger, a fussy little man with two small boys strung out behind him who came so fast that Andrew half expected to see him "snap the whip" any moment and send the tiniest boy hurtling through space. But he didn't. He herded the children into a car and smiled triumphantly at Andrew. Evidently, he considered that arriving with only five minutes to spare was a reckless proceeding. There were the usual last-moment arrivals and then the train reluctantly pulled out, leaving Andrew alone on the platform.

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Two blocks away was a hotel, and thither he made his way. Capturing a telephone directory, he found a chair by a window and turned to the list of hotels. There was an appalling lot of them and nothing to indicate which were of the sort likely to be patronised by Myron. But he had three hours before him and plenty of money, and was not discouraged. He took a piece of paper from a pocket, unscrewed his pen and set to work. Ten minutes later he was ready. The lobby was practically deserted and he had the telephone booths to himself. When he had exhausted all the nickels he had he crossed to the news-stand and had a dollar bill changed. Then he went on with his campaign. It was slow work, for many of the hotels were extremely deliberate in answering. The voices that came back to him sounded sleepy, and some sounded cross as well.

"Is Myron Foster stopping there?" Andrew would ask.

"Who? Fostick? How do you spell it? Oh! What are the initials? Hold the line, please." Then, after a wait: "No such party registered."

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At any rate, that is the way it went for nearly twenty minutes. Then luck turned.

Myron was still slumbering when the telephone rang a second time. For a moment he stared at the ceiling, a perfectly strange ceiling that seemed to return his regard coldly, and strove to think where he was. While he was still struggling the impatient instrument on the table beside the bed buzzed again. Myron reached for it and recollection came to him.

"Yes," he said sleepily. "Hello!"

"Gentleman to see you, Mr. Foster. Shall we send him up?"

"Gentleman to see me!" echoed Myron. Was it possible that his father had learned already of his departure from school and had come up from Port Foster? He was thoroughly awake now. "What is the name?" he asked. After a moment of silence: "Merriman," said the voice at the other end. "Merriman?" thought Myron. "I don't know any Merriman! Except Andy. Who the dickens —"

"I didn't hear, Mr. Foster," said the clerk politely.

"Oh—er—all right! Ask him to come up, please." Myron put the receiver down, unlocked the door and returned to bed to hug his knees and stare perplexedly at the footboard. Who the dickens was Merriman? Of course it couldn't be Andy. This was Philadelphia, and Andy was several hundred miles away. Well, he would soon know! Then came a tap at the door and Myron said "Come in" in an unnecessarily loud tone and the portal opened. Then it closed again. And Myron, with eyes that looked as big and as round as butter-chips, whispered: "*Where'd you come from?*"

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CHAPTER XXII

MYRON COMES BACK

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"Afraid I've spoiled your beauty sleep, Myron," said the visitor. "Sorry, but I've been up so long I forgot how early it was."

"What—what are you doing over here?" gasped Myron.

"Looking for you, of course," replied Andrew easily as he seated himself on the bed. "Nice quarters you've got. Next time, though, I wish you'd locate further up on the alphabet. It's a long way to the M's!"

"Are you crazy or—or am I?" asked Myron helplessly.

"Neither, I hope," answered the visitor calmly. "You see, I set out to find you on the telephone and had to call up about twenty hotels before I got the right one. I started with the A's and you, as it happened, were among the M's."

"What did you want to find me for? Who sent you?"

"Well, I suppose you might say that Joe sent me. At least, he had the idea first. After that, I sort of sent myself."

"You might have spared yourself the trouble," said Myron defiantly. "I'm not going back!"

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Apparently Andrew didn't hear that. "Joe was all fussed up, like a hen who's hatched out a duck. He came around about half-past eight and loaded me with money and handed me my hat, so to speak. Got in here around five-thirty. You didn't show up at the station for the seven-twelve, so I changed my money into nickels and proceeded to make the telephone company enormously wealthy. You've cost me—or, rather, Joe—a lot of money, Myron." Andrew shook his head sadly. "And I'm not sure you're worth it, either."

"I didn't ask him to spend money on me," said Myron sulkily. "He hadn't any business butting in, anyway. It's my own affair. If I want to leave school I've got a right to, and—"

"Back up! Who told you that?"

"Told me what?" asked Myron blankly.

"That you had a right to leave school."

"Why, no one told me! But it's so!"

"No, sir, it isn't," said Andrew emphatically. "You haven't any more right to leave school than a soldier has to leave his post, or a policeman his beat. Not a bit more, Myron."

"That isn't so," answered the other excitedly. "It isn't the same at all. Duty is one thing and— and staying where you don't get a square deal's another. My folks have a right to take me away from Parkinson whenever they want to!"

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"Have they taken you out?"

"No, they don't know yet. But they will when I ask them to."

"That's all right, then. What your folks do is another matter, old man. It's what you do that I'm talking about. Why do you say you haven't had a square deal?"

"Because I haven't! Look at what Jud did to me! First of all, they made me take too many courses, courses I didn't want to take at all, some of them. Then when I couldn't keep them up just as—just as they think I ought to, they came down on me! Jud says I can't play football. Just because Addicks has it in for me. Addicks calls on me twice as often as any other fellow in class. I hate Latin, anyway. I didn't want to take it this year. Next year would be time enough. Driscoll made me work like a slave, and I didn't have time enough for all the things I'm supposed to

study, and Jud socked it to me. I'd been trying for a month to get on the team, and now, just when I was sure of a place, Jud springs this! Call that a square deal? I don't!"

"Well, it's sort of tough luck, old man. How long are you off for?"

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"He wouldn't tell me. Said we'd wait and see, or something. He can wait. I'm through."

"Still, I don't see how you're helping things much by running away," said Andrew mildly. "If you want to play on the team you'll have to do it by mail, won't you?"

"Oh, I'm done wanting to," answered Myron roughly. "I'm done with the whole rotten place."

"And Joe and me? I see."

"I didn't say I had anything against you and Joe," retorted Myron indignantly. "Or—or some other fellows. The fellows are all right. It—it's the school. The way they do things. They don't give you a chance. They aren't fair."

"So you even up by not being fair, too?"

"What do you mean by that?" asked Myron, glowering.

"Why, you get mad because you think faculty has treated you badly, and then you turn around and treat other folks badly."

"What other folks?" asked Myron.

"Your friends, the football team and, through that, the whole school."

"How do you make that out?" Myron demanded, frowning.

"Well, take Joe and me, for instance. We're in the picture. You let us take a liking to you, which we wouldn't have done if we hadn't thought you a good, square sort, the sort that does his duty even if it looks hard. Then when duty gets a bit tiresome you kick us in the shins and run away. Same way with the team. You went out for it and the coach and the rest spent time and effort on you. They thought you were a square sort, too. They wouldn't knowingly make a poor investment any more than Joe and I would. Then, when you hit a snag, you repudiate your debt to them and beat it. You had a chance to make a good player of yourself and win a position on the team and help bring about a victory for the school. Because you get mad with Jud, you tell the school to go to the dickens. In other words, Myron, old man, you're a quitter."

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"I'm not!" cried the other desperately. "You're making it out all wrong! Besides, it wouldn't make any difference to the school if I stayed. I'm out of football."

"I don't see it. You're out of football until you get back your class standing. The right thing to do is to get it back as soon as you can. It's your fault that you lost it. There's no use kidding yourself, Myron. You got in trouble with Addicks because you didn't play fair with him. You got in trouble with Jud for the same reason. Now you won't play fair with the rest of us. Think it over."

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"It's not so, Andy! I tell you I didn't have time to study that beastly Latin! Joe knows I didn't. I was too tired at night. I couldn't!"

"If that's really so you should have told Driscoll to let up on you. But I think the trouble was that you didn't make the best use of the time you had. You have two hours every morning, to my certain knowledge, when you've no classes, and I've never heard of you making use of them for study."

"It's all well enough for you to preach," retorted Myron bitterly. "You *like* the wretched stuff! You don't have any trouble with it. I do. I—even if I went back I'd never catch up in class."

"Oh, yes, you would. I'll guarantee that. I'll promise you that you'll be in good standing with Addicks by next Saturday."

Myron stared, surprised, doubtful. "How?" he asked at length.

"I'll look after the 'how,' old man."

"You mean you'll tutor me again?"

Andrew nodded. Myron dropped his gaze to the counterpane. A minute of silence followed during which the ticking of Myron's watch on the bedside table sounded loudly in the room. Then said Andrew briskly: "There's a New York train at ten, I think. That'll give you time for breakfast and let us catch the one-something back. You get your bath and dress and I'll go down and buy a paper. Don't know but what I'll have a bite more myself. My breakfast was a trifle sketchy. How long will you be?"

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Myron continued to study the counterpane. Another silence ensued. Finally, though, it was broken by Myron. "Twenty minutes," he said in a low voice.

It was dark when they stepped off the train at Warne. As they did so a form detached itself from the lamp-lit gloom of the platform and a voice asked cautiously: "That you, Andy?" Then Myron felt a hand tugging at his suit-case, and: "Let me have it, kiddo," said Joe. "We'll go over to Andy's and leave it there until tomorrow. Better not take any risks."

They skirted the end of the train, avoiding publicity as much as was possible, and made their way toward Mill Street. Only when they were a block from the track was the silence broken again. Then Andy asked: "Everything all right, Joe?"

"I think so. But I'm sure glad you didn't leave it until the next train. I'd have had nervous prostration long before that! I had the dogs out three times and fed them. There wasn't anything

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else to do. Maybe they've bust themselves eating, but it can't be helped. That kid over in Williams—Wynant or something—has a grouch a mile long, Andy. You'll have to kiss him, I guess, before he will ever smile again! How are you, kiddo?"

"All right, thanks," answered Myron rather constrainedly.

"That's good. By the way, I had to give the impression that you were having dinner out somewhere. So if any one mentions it you'd better play up."

"Who did you tell?" asked Myron.

"I don't think I exactly *told* any one, but I let Jud Mellen go away with the idea."

"Was he looking for me?"

"Yeah, wanted you to hurry up and get back to work," replied Joe carelessly. "I told him that if you weren't back inside a week I'd bust every bone in your body."

"He will be," said Andrew grimly. "If he isn't you may bust mine!"

Just before supper time Joe beat a tattoo on the portal of Number 16 Goss. Chas Cummins' voice bade him enter. Joe, however, only stuck his head into the room, and, nodding to Brown, said in a deep, mysterious whisper: "*Yes-s-s!*" Then he closed the door and went off down the corridor, chuckling. In Number 16, Brown raised his brows and looked inquiringly at his chum.

"Batty?" he asked.

A day passed before Joe and Myron breathed freely. By Monday evening it seemed quite safe to assume that Myron's absence had passed undetected. They went across town and brought the suit-case home then, Joe, however, transferring certain articles, such as Myron's pyjamas, to his pockets in case some inquisitive member of the faculty should insist on looking inside the bag. But none challenged and the suit-case went back to the closet and Myron's toilet articles to their places, and the episode was closed. The two spoke of it but briefly. That was Sunday night, as they were preparing for bed. Then Joe remarked conversationally: "You're a crazy loon, kiddo, aren't you?" After a moment of reflection Myron said "Yes," quite humbly.

"Sure are," agreed Joe, tossing his trousers in the general direction of a chair. "Any time any guy accuses you of having sense, you knock him down. I'll stand by you. Still, you have your uses, and I'm glad to see you in our midst again. How about being here, now that you are!"

"Tickled to death," owned Myron a bit shamefacedly.

Joe chuckled. "Knew you would be," he said. "We ain't—aren't such a bad lot when you take us, right. Good night, kiddo."

"Good night, Joe. I—you—I mean, thanks!"

CHAPTER XXIII

REINSTATED

Myron isn't likely to forget for a long time the week that followed. Every afternoon at four o'clock appeared Andrew, armed for the fray, and for two hours of a hundred and twenty minutes each Myron wrestled with Latin. Andrew was merciless. From the stroke of four to the stroke of six was the inexorable rule. Myron's pleas weren't even heard. After two days he got fairly used to it, though, and then the labour began to bear fruit. Mr. Addicks shot a keen and questioning glance at Myron on Wednesday and followed it with one of mild approval on Thursday. Saturday morning Myron was again out of the woods, although, as Andrew reminded him more than once, whether he stayed so depended on whether he was willing to study hard and long and resolutely. Myron reached the conclusion that he was.

But being out of the woods did not necessarily place him in the full sunlight of faculty favour, and so it was from the grandstand that he saw Parkinson play Chancellor School at Mt. Wansett, and not from the players' bench. Myron had doubts as to his right to make the trip, and put the matter up to Joe. Joe did not observe, as he might have, that, having got as far away as Philadelphia without leave, going to a not distant town under like conditions shouldn't worry Myron! Instead, he advised him to put the question up to Mr. Hoyt. The secretary referred to a mysterious book and shook his head. "I can't find that you have gone on probation, Foster," he said. "Nothing here indicates it. You say Doctor Lane forbade you to play football? Was anything said about probation?"

"No, sir. I only thought—was afraid——"

"Well, I should say there was no intention, then. If I were you I'd assume that I was not on probation. However, if you still have doubts I'll take the matter up with the Principal as soon as he's at leisure, and if you'll drop in again about twelve——"

"But the train goes at eleven, sir!" Mr. Hoyt smiled faintly. "In that case, Foster, I don't see how you can be here at twelve."

"You think, then, that——"

"I think so."

Myron hurried out before the secretary had time to change his mind and think differently!

It rained that day, and the game was played in a sea of water on a soft and slippery turf. Many boys who had meant to accompany the team backed out when they viewed the weather, and only a handful huddled in raincoats behind the Parkinson bench and aided the Brown with damp enthusiasm. Not that a great deal of cheering was needed, however, for the first period settled the outcome of the contest, and after that it was merely a question of whether Chancellor would score. Parkinson started with the line-up that, so rumour had it, would face Kenwood two weeks later: Stearns and Norris, ends; Mellen and Keith, tackles; Cummins and Dobbins, guards; Cantrell, centre; Cater, quarter; Meldrum and Brown, halves; Kearns, full. But that arrangement did not outlast the second period. The third began with the score 19 to 0 and five substitutes on the field. And during the subsequent thirty minutes of playing time additional changes were frequent. Parkinson ended with many third substitutes in the line-up, to which may be fairly attributed the fact that Chancellor saved her face at the last and scored seven points.

With a slippery field and a wet ball, both teams had stuck pretty closely to line plays, but some five or six minutes from the end, Grove, playing quarter, took a chance and shot the ball to Houghton, at full, for a wide run around left end. Houghton muffed, not a difficult thing to do when the ball is as slippery as a pat of butter and it reaches you off at one side, and the fat was in the fire. A defeated team is a dangerous team, and Chancellor proved it then and there by piling through the Parkinson first and second defences, upsetting the distressed Houghton and salvaging the pigskin some thirty yards from the Brown's goal-line. For the first time in many long, wet minutes the spectators had something to thrill over. A long-limbed, shock-headed Chancellor forward in mud-reeking pants and torn jersey, wearied and winded, went plunging and stumbling and slipping toward a touchdown with the field strewn out behind him. Interference was hasty but effective. Parkinson and Chancellor youths went down like nine-pins, splashing into puddles, gouging into mud. For a moment it seemed that the incident would end with twenty-two players flat on the wet ground and only the officials erect! But, although many fell by the way, others managed to keep their feet and run it out, and among these was the youth with the ball. Twice he went to his knees, but each time he recovered before the enemy reached him, and in the end he slid over the line close to the left goal-post, and Chancellor shouted and leaped with delight.

After the goal was prettily kicked the teams went at it again, but to all purposes the game was over and the score didn't change again. Twenty-nine to seven were the figures that, later in the day, brought uneasiness to the Kenwood camp. Yet, returning to Warne, it was noticed that Coach Driscoll's countenance did not reflect the satisfaction shown on other faces. After supper that evening he told Jud Mellen why. "You chaps played a rattling game today," he said almost regretfully. "I haven't a criticism to make that's worth the breath it would cost. Even the second and third subs were good, almost without exception. But I sort of wish you hadn't done so well, and that's the truth."

"Afraid of a slump," said Jud, nodding thoughtfully.

"Well, not exactly that. When a team reaches its best two weeks before the big game it doesn't take a slump to queer it. It only needs a return to ordinary playing, if you see what I mean. All you fellows need do to get beaten two weeks from today is to play the sort of football you played last week against Day and Robins. There's just that much difference between fine football and good football, Cap. If it had been Kenwood today instead of Chancellor, we'd have the championship tucked away in our belt this evening. I guess I've made a mistake somewhere: let you fellows come too fast the last week or so. But I didn't have any warning that you were on the last lap. It hasn't shown once. Well, it's up to us now to stay where we are, Cap."

"Or go ahead," said Jud.

But Mr. Driscoll shook his head. "I'd like to think so, but I'm afraid we reached top-notch today. I'm always scared for a team that hasn't had a slump some time during the season. And we haven't. Not a real, sure-enough slump. There was a tendency after the Phillipsburg game, but it didn't really amount to anything."

"Well, I don't feel like slumping," laughed Jud. "And I haven't noticed any signs of it in the others. Every one's as cocky as you please tonight, and barring a few bruises—and Flay's knee—they're all in fine shape."

"Yes, we came out of it mighty well," agreed the coach. "I hate a wet field, Cap. I hope to goodness this rain doesn't keep on for two or three days. Rainy weather can play hob with a team that's the least bit over-trained."

"You're a regular pessimist tonight, Coach," Jud laughed. "Cheer up! By the way, Dobbins told me this evening that Foster's expecting to get off pro. Kearns wasn't half bad today, but it would certainly make me feel easier in what I call my mind to have Foster ready to take his place."

"Yes. See if you can get him out Monday. There isn't a whole lot of time left. Still, he's learned the position fairly well and might give a good account of himself as he is. With another ten days of training he ought to make a good second for Kearns."

The rain continued during Sunday and Myron was restless and inclined to be as much of a pessimist as the head coach. He was difficult to live with, too, and Joe dragged him over to Mill Street after dinner in the hope that Andrew would be good for his soul. Andrew did, in truth, perk him up not a little, predicting that he would get his release from Doctor Lane the next day.

"I dare say he's forgotten all about me," said Myron dismally. "Suppose Addicks doesn't tell

him I've made good?"

"Well, it's up to Addicks, and that's a fact," responded Andrew. "If nothing happens by noon, I'd advise you to go to him and tell him the facts. Tell him you want to get back on the team and can't until he speaks a good word for you to Jud. Addicks is a good sport and will do it. I think he will, anyhow, though. You see if you don't hear from Jud in the morning."

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So Myron decided to hope for the best and forgot his worries watching the amusing antics of the puppies, by now sturdy little rascals who made their mother's life a burden and a boredom.

Andrew's prediction came true, for the next morning Myron was again summoned to the Office and conducted into the presence of Doctor Lane.

"Mr. Addicks tells me that you're doing very much better, Foster," announced the Doctor. "In fact, he recommends that we lift the restrictions in your case. Do you think that you will be able to stay in good standing now?"

"Yes, sir. I'm going to try hard, anyway," said Myron earnestly.

Doctor Lane smiled. "In that case I believe that you will succeed, my boy. It's wonderful what really trying will accomplish. Very well, Foster. You have permission to go back and grind your face in the sod again. Like football do you?"

"Very much, sir."

"So do I. I used to play it once, a good many years ago. Do you consider that we have a good chance to beat Kenwood this fall?"

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"Yes, sir, I think we will. We've got a bully team!"

"So I understand. Well, we'll hope so. Good morning, Foster."

Once outside the door of the outer office, Myron broke into song. As a musical effort it was not remarkably successful, but as an expression of his feelings it met all requirements. Turning into the entrance corridor, he almost ran into Paul Eldredge. He and Paul had never spoken since the encounter on the walk that evening. Paul's attitude toward him had been one of armed neutrality expressed in sullen silence and sarcastic glances. Now, acting on impulse, Myron stopped and spoke.

"Say, Eldredge," he blurted, "let's call it off! What do you say? I'm sorry for whatever it was that—that offended you."

Eldredge, surprised, at a loss, stared at Myron's smiling countenance for an instant, trying to think of something sarcastic. Failing, he grunted, and then, as Myron kept silence and waited, he said: "All right," none too graciously; adding: "I'm satisfied if you are. You started it, anyway."

Myron couldn't remember whether he had or hadn't just then, so he yielded the point. "Did I? I'm sorry then. Let's forget it, eh?"

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Eldredge nodded more amiably. "Sure! I'm willing."

Then Myron nodded, laughed for no reason that the other could fathom, and hurried on. The laugh had nothing to do with Eldredge or with the making of peace, but was just an advertisement of the fact that life looked very good to him at the moment.

Mr. Addicks, a half-hour later, positively beamed on him, to the quiet amusement of those of the class who knew of Myron's recent status, and Myron decided that the Latin instructor was "a corking old chap." Reinstatement amongst the first team substitutes proved a most casual affair that afternoon. He reported to Farnsworth and the manager said, rather decently, "Glad you're back, Foster. All right, get into it. That's your squad down the field."

CHAPTER XXIV

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EDDIE APPLIES THE BRAKE

I think the experiences of the past week had cleared the air in Myron's case. Perhaps Andrew's curtain lecture at the hotel that Sunday morning had its effect. Perhaps, too, the knowledge that Joe and Andy had cared enough to go to all that scheming and effort to bring him back and save him from his own folly bucked him up. At all events, he went to work hammer-and-tongs and by Wednesday night had Steve Kearns looking worried. Chas, viewing events interestedly, chuckled to himself. Things were working his way. Not only was he secretly aiding and abetting the career of Myron, but there were three others among the first and second choice fellows who were under his care and who, willingly or unwillingly, followed his instructions. Had Chas cared to he could have taken a pencil and paper and written down the line-up for next season's first important contest. Needless to say, against the position of left guard would have been the name of Cummins.

Chas was not without his qualms of uneasiness, though, for Brodhead was now pushing him hard for his place. Attending to the duties of next year's captain in anticipation somewhat detracted from his playing qualities, and when, on Thursday, he found himself left on the bench while Brodhead was sent into the game against the second at left guard, he realised dismayedly

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that he would have to let next season look after itself for the present and reinstate himself in the coach's good graces. Chas' plans revolved on his election to the captaincy, and it wasn't usual to elect to that position a fellow who had not played in the big game. Chas studied his scarred knuckles thoughtfully and wondered to just what extent Mr. Driscoll would let his personal feelings rule when it came to a choice between him and Brodhead for the Kenwood game. Chas knew perfectly well that the coach, without disliking him, held it in for him on one or two scores, and one must allow for a certain amount of human nature, he reflected, in even a football coach! Mentally he shook his head and acknowledged that he would have to mend his ways. He wasn't certain, for that matter, that it was not already too late, that, to use his own expression, he had not already "spilled the beans"!

That Thursday Myron got himself talked about. He went in at full-back in the second half, vice Kearns, and showed himself a remarkably proficient player at that position. Coach Driscoll watched him in genuine surprise, although, as usual, he hid his feelings. "He's just about four times as good as he was before he was laid off," he said to himself, "and at least twice as good as I ever thought he would be. Why, the chap's a born full-back! Give him a few more pounds for line-bucking and he will size up with any of them. Next year he ought to be All-American material, by Jupiter! But I mustn't spoil him. He's too good. And if he gets to knowing how good he is, he's likely to get fond of himself and fizzle out. I think he's the sort to do that. No, I guess we'll keep your spurs trimmed down pretty close, Foster, my lad!" And in furtherance of that plan the coach strode across to the first team backfield and metaphorically ripped Myron up the back, to the bewilderment of Myron and the puzzlement of Jud and Joe and Katie and some others! Myron ended the game in a chastened mood, conscious of having made two touchdowns, one by a wide run behind good interference and one by downright grit from the four yards when the advance had seemed at an end, but equally conscious that he had not done as well as he should have. He had Coach Driscoll's word for the latter, although the coach had somehow failed to specify very exactly wherein Myron had failed. There had been talk about "getting low" and "using your legs," but Myron didn't really see how he could have struck the line much lower without going into it on his head or how he could have got another ounce of push out of those wearied legs of his. In the end, having been refreshed with food and having listened to hearty praise from his friends, he decided that coaches were strange persons not always to be taken seriously. But he didn't get a swelled head over the day's performance, which was what the coach had guarded against.

There was no practice on Friday for the first team players, and so when Myron found a note in the mail that morning signed Maurice Millard saying that the writer would be in Warne that noon and asking Myron to meet him at the hotel at two o'clock, the latter was able to promise himself an enjoyable afternoon. Unfortunately, he had a recitation at two, but he left a note for Millard at the hotel in the forenoon postponing the meeting until a quarter to three. He recalled Millard very pleasantly and was glad he was to meet him again. He liked that name, too, Maurice Millard: it had a swing to it, he thought, even if it did sound rather like the name of a moving-picture artist! He wished that Millard had chosen to look him up at his room, for he would have liked to introduce him to Joe. Joe had seemed somehow rather sceptical as to Millard's charms. But he could bring the visitor to Sohmer later on, for of course he would want to see the school and visit the football field and so on.

But, rather strangely—or so Myron thought,—Millard declared in favour of taking a drive into the country. "We can look around the school when we get back," he explained. "It's a wonderful day for a drive and I'm much fonder of the country than I am of towns. And we can have a jolly chat, too, and you won't have to interrupt yourself every ten seconds to say 'That's Smith Hall, built in 1876 and used by General Washington as headquarters during the football game between Parkinson and Kenwood,' or some other such dope."

As to its being a wonderful day for driving, Myron had his doubts, for summer had returned and the weather was decidedly hot in spite of the fact that November was two weeks old. Still, driving might be pleasanter than walking, and the guest had the right to choose his entertainment, and Myron capitulated. To find a conveyance, however, was not so easy, for no Jehus slept along the curb in front of the little hotel when they went in search of one. Myron suggested walking to the station, only a block or so distant, and Millard consented. The difficulty was solved before they got that far, however, for a new, highly varnished taxi-cab darted toward them from a side street and a dimly remembered youth on the driver's seat hailed Myron by name. He proved to be the fellow who had conveyed Myron to Sohmer that first day of school, and by the time the latter had ended negotiations for the hiring of the cab by the hour he remembered that the sandy-haired young man was named Eddie Moses. The cab appeared to be brand-new and was certainly a vast improvement over the former one. They went briskly out of the town toward Sturgis, and, with all windows open, the drive promised to be as enjoyable as Millard had predicted.

The visitor was as smartly, if quietly, dressed as when Myron had seen him last, and Myron was secretly glad that he had gone to extra pains in the matter of his own attire. Myron asked about business and Millard reported everything fine, and said that he had managed to get a small order from the local dealer in athletic supplies that morning. "Not much, you know, but enough to let us show him that we have the goods he wants and can sell to him cheaper than that New York house. It's a wedge, Foster."

In spite of Millard's expressed love of the country, he didn't seem to pay much attention to its beauties. Before they had gone a mile he had switched the conversation from athletic goods to football, of which he appeared to know a great deal. Myron wondered if he had played when at school, and what that school had been, but somehow he never got around to asking. He was glad

enough to talk about football, and he managed before long to let Millard know that he was now a member of the Parkinson first team. Millard was clearly delighted with his friend's good fortune, and congratulated him warmly.

"I'll bet anything you'll make good, too, Foster, when you fellows meet Kenwood. I hear they've got only a fair team over there this year. I was talking to a fellow from there only a couple of days ago. 'We aren't telling it around, Art'—my name's Maurice Arthur, you know, and some fellows call me Art," he explained parenthetically. "We aren't telling it around, but between you and me we've got a pretty punk outfit this year. We're trying to keep Parkinson guessing, but if they play the sort of game they played against Chancellor they'll have us on the run from the beginning.' Maybe I oughtn't to tell this to a Parkinson fellow, but he didn't tell me not to, and you and I are friends, so I guess there's no harm. Besides, I'd like mighty well to see you fellows lick that Kenwood bunch. They're too stuck-up for me."

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"I won't say anything about it to any one," said Myron virtuously. "Probably your friend wouldn't want it to get to our team."

"Oh, never mind what he wants. If telling your fellows'll do them any good, you go ahead and tell them. I'll stand for it. How is the team getting along, by the way? That was certainly a peach of a licking you gave Chancellor. I was reading about it in the paper last Sunday."

Myron replied that the team was getting on famously, and went into rather intimate details to prove it. Millard was flatteringly interested and encouraged Myron to talk, which Myron was nothing loath to do since he was on a subject that appealed to him vastly. Millard had many questions to ask, questions which showed conclusively that he had a close understanding of football and a wide acquaintance among players. With such a listener Myron found it easy to pursue his subject. Millard introduced debate by throwing doubt on the ability of the Parkinson ends. He said he thought Cousins and Leeds, the Kenwood ends, would have the better of the argument, and was only convinced to the contrary after Myron had very thoroughly explained Stearns' and Norris' methods, both on offence and defence. There was simply no end to Millard's interest in football, and once—they were running through the town of Sturgis at the moment—when Myron feared that he was boring the other, in spite of apparent willingness to listen, and sought to change the subject, it was Millard who soon brought it back again.

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How the matter of signals came up, Myron didn't afterward recall, but it did, and it was exhaustively dealt with. Millard spoke of a case he knew of where the intricacy of the signals had lost an important game for a certain high school team. "I always think that the more simple the signal system is the better it is. You take the big colleges, now, Foster. They don't ball the men all up with double numberings and 'repeats' and all those silly tricks. They select a simple system, one that's easy to learn and remember. Why, I've seen quarter-backs stutter and fumble around for whole minutes trying to get their signals straightened out. And as for the number of times that backs have spoiled a play because they didn't get the signals right——" Millard whistled eloquently.

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"Guess we won't have any trouble that way," answered Myron complacently. "Our system's as simple as simple."

"That so? Holes and players numbered from left to right, eh?"

"No, we begin at the ends."

"Yes, that's a better scheme. Left end is 1, left tackle, 3, and so on, I suppose."

"No, we don't number the players that way. The openings——"

The taxi-cab stopped so suddenly that Myron bit his tongue over the last word as he pitched forward. Of course Millard described much the same gymnastic feat, but it is doubtful if Millard heard, or thought he heard, what Myron did in the brief instant that his head protruded through a front window, for Eddie Moses' neck stayed Myron's forward flight and Eddie's mouth was but a few inches from Myron's ear. And in the part of a second that it remained there it got the impression that some one, presumably Eddie, had distinctly said: "*Shut up!*" That impression did not register on his brain, however, until he was back in his seat and Eddie had released his emergency brake. Then, while Eddie, in reply to Millard's somewhat incensed question, was apologetically explaining something about a dog that had run almost under the wheels, he stared startledly at the back of Eddie's head. That told him nothing, though, and he harked back to the interrupted conversation to discover what could have brought such a fiercely voiced admonition from the driver, if, indeed, that admonition had not been imagined. The shaking-up, however, had jostled memory as well as body, and it was Millard who supplied the information he sought.

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"I didn't see any dog," he said huffily to Eddie. "Guess you imagined it. Now, then, Foster, you were explaining about that numbering."

"What numbering?" asked Myron blankly.

"Forgotten?" laughed Millard. "Why, we were talking about signals, don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes," answered Myron thoughtfully. "So we were. How would it do to take the Princeville Road back, Eddie? That'll give us more of a drive."

As a matter of fact, it would do nothing of the sort, and Myron knew it, and Eddie Moses knew it when he added cheerfully, "All right, boss!" Only Millard didn't know it, although it is likely that he suspected it later when, in far less time than it had taken them to reach Sturgis, they were back again in Warne. During that journey back, made at a greater speed than the trip away, Millard tried vainly to swing the conversation back to the topic of football, and football signals in

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particular, but Myron seemed to have suddenly wearied of the subject and wouldn't stay put a minute. He pointed out features of the landscape for Millard's admiring observation and invented quite a few interesting legends about passing houses or farms. After a while Millard managed to display some enthusiasm for nature and for the legends and was quite the entertaining and charming youth he had been before that shaking-up. But Myron thought that there had been a quarter of an hour subsequent to it when the visitor had sounded out of patience and even a trifle short-tempered. He might have simply imagined it, though. They were back in town long before five, and Millard's train didn't leave until after six, and there was plenty of time to visit the school, but Millard recalled a forgotten appointment at the hotel and was set down there accordingly. He was most apologetic and thanked Myron for a good time and begged to be allowed to go halves on the cab bill. This privilege Myron indignantly denied. Millard promised to look Myron up again shortly.

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"I want to see the school and all that, you know, Foster," he declared. "Wish I could run up there now, but I'll be tied up until train time. The next time I come you must come down and have dinner with me."

They shook hands and parted, Myron returning to the cab and bidding Eddie drive him to Sohmer. But out of sight of the hotel Myron leaned over and addressed the back of Eddie's freckled neck. "Did you say anything to me the time I went through the window?" he asked.

"Yeah, I said 'Shut up!' You was doing a lot of fancy talking to that guy, seemed to me. 'Course, he might be a friend of yours and all, but you was telling him things about the football team that you hadn't ought to, see? That's why I jammed on the 'mergency. There wasn't no dog at all!"

"Oh," murmured Myron, "I see. Maybe you're right. Anyway, I'm much obliged. Of course, Millard is perfectly square, but he might talk."

"Yeah, he might," agreed Eddie. "Or he might let some one else do the talking. Here you are, sir! Sohmer Hall, home of the rude rich! Thank you, sir." Eddie winked knowingly. "I'm not talking any. Don't you worry about me, sir. So long!"

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Myron made his way up the steps of the dormitory, under the envious regard of three third class youths, and climbed the stairs somewhat thoughtfully. Certainly, Maurice Millard was all right, but he was awfully glad that Eddie had imagined that dog. Millard had repeated what the Kenwood chap had told him about the Kenwood team, information plainly not intended for publicity, which showed that he was not exactly close-mouthed. On the whole, decided Myron, he had come horribly near to making an utter fool of himself. He decided to say nothing about it to Joe. Joe must already have a good enough opinion of his common sense!

CHAPTER XXV

FALSE COLOURS

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The preliminary season came to an end the next day with the St. Luke's Academy game. Football affairs had become fairly hectic now and the school marched to the field behind a strident brass band, cheering and singing. Mass-meetings had been held twice weekly ever since the Warne High School contest, and songs had been practised and cheers rehearsed, and today Parkinson was in fine voice and filled with enthusiasm. St. Luke's was not a formidable opponent, and for that reason had been chosen to fill in the last date before the Kenwood game. A wise coach selects the semi-final adversary with care and deliberation, and a wrong selection may work much harm to his charges. St. Luke's was warranted by past experience to give Parkinson a good battle without requiring any extraordinary exertions on the latter's part. Usually the score was one or two touchdowns to none, although not so long ago the generally docile St. Luke's had kicked over the traces in the annual event and thrown a healthy scare into Parkinson. On that historic occasion the final score had been 17 to 10 in the home team's favour.

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The Brown line-up was exactly as at the start of the Chancellor game, with a single exception. The name of Foster appeared as full-back instead of Kearns. Whether he had been put in to save Kearns for the Kenwood game or whether he was there on his merits, Myron couldn't decide. But he played a good game while he remained in the line-up. The cheering was fine and put heart into them all, and Myron felt that afternoon as though he could "lick his weight in wild-cats," as Joe might have put it. He wasn't called on for many punts, which was perhaps fortunate, for his punting still lacked control. If he got distance he was likely to send the pigskin to the wrong place, while if he obtained direction he was liable to kick short. But in the other departments he showed up strongly. He was a big addition to the backfield on defence, using his weight very knowingly, and more than one St. Luke's gain was nipped in the bud by him. Speed aided him at line plunges, and his runs, of which he got off three during the time he played, together netted nineteen yards against clever ends. Altogether, he was a success, and coach and school recognised the fact, and when, five minutes after the beginning of the second half, he got rather the worst of a mix-up with the St. Luke's left half and was taken out in favour of Kearns, he got a hearty cheer as he walked none too steadily to the bench.

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Myron was not the only player who deserved praise that afternoon, for every fellow on the team was good. If the perfection exhibited in the Chancellor game was not quite duplicated it was possibly because the incentive was lacking. St. Luke's was outweighed by several pounds and

was slower than she should have been. And she seemed, too, to lack plays adapted to her style of football. Parkinson failed to score in the first quarter, ran up eleven points in the second, seven more in the third and, in the last period, with a line consisting almost entirely of substitutes, and with second-string backs behind it, added a field goal by way of good measure. Every one, even Coach Driscoll, appeared perfectly satisfied with the afternoon's performance, and Parkinson's stock soared high that evening. It looked very much as if the season was to glide smoothly and uneventfully to a satisfactory close. But a week still intervened, and in a week much may happen.

On Monday, Norris, right end, started the programme of events by breaking a bone in his right ankle. He did it by falling over a pail on the stairs in Williams Hall. It wasn't a serious disaster, but it might easily impair his playing ability five days later. Tuesday, Grafton, first-choice substitute for Captain Mellen, came down with laryngitis, and Snow, who was due to take Cantrell's place at centre in the event of that player's retirement, was called home to Illinois because of serious illness in the family. Coach Driscoll smiled grimly and wondered what further misfortunes could happen in the remaining three days. Coach Driscoll, it may be said, was never designed for the peaceful life. He was more contented when he was facing difficulties. Jud Mellen, himself worried by the ill-luck, remarked almost resentfully Tuesday evening: "Gee, Coach, any one would think you'd got news that the whole Kenwood team was down with the sleeping sickness, you look so bright and merry. I'm sick!"

"No use pulling a long face, Cap," replied Mr. Driscoll. "After all, we've come through the season remarkably. Something was bound to go wrong, and I felt it. I guess I'm rather relieved to find out what it is. And it might have been worse."

"Yes, we might have lost the whole team," responded Jud sarcastically. "Oh, I suppose we can pull through if nothing worse happens, but I'm expecting Katie to fall off a roof or Brown to get kicked by a mule tomorrow. This has got me going for fair!"

"You look after Number One," advised the coach. "The best way to kill a trouble is to laugh it to death!"

Jud expressed incredulous surprise when Wednesday passed without further misfortunes. There was a monster meeting that night and a march through town and a speech by the Principal from the porch of his residence and much enthusiasm and noise. Myron did not take part in the observances, for the players were now required to remain in their rooms evenings as far as possible and to be in bed promptly at ten o'clock. So far, Myron had felt no nervousness, nothing approaching stage-fright, but when Thursday arrived and the field was well surrounded with cheering youths and townsfolk and the band that was to play on Saturday was adding to the din and there was only light signal work, followed by punting and catching for the backs, instead of the relief of a good, hard scrimmage, why, then he felt a trifle fluttery about the heart. It meant so much to all those eager-eyed, laughing but secretly earnest boys about him, that hoped-for victory, and he was chosen to aid in the securing of it! The realisation of responsibility sobered him and then left him a trifle panic-stricken. Suppose he failed them, the coach and Captain Mellen and the school! For the moment it seemed that in such an event he would not have the courage to stay on and face them all. He almost wished that Coach Driscoll would let Kearns play instead! But that wish didn't last long, and the panic was short-lived, too. There was still a vague uneasiness disturbing him, however, and that uneasiness was due to remain with him during his waking hours until the whistle blew on Saturday.

The second team, its usefulness at an end, cheered and was cheered and performed a dignified ceremony behind the east goal, to which, since the first team players had trotted back to the gymnasium, the audience flocked. Gravely, reverently, torn jerseys, worn-out pants, shoes beyond aid and various other disreputable articles of football attire and use were piled on the jumping pit. Then a football rules book was laid on top of all, a gallon of kerosene applied and around the blazing pyre the members of the second team slowly circled with joined hands, chanting a strange jumble of atrocious Latin and scarcely more acceptable English. Gradually the pace grew faster and the pæan brisker until, presently, the scene was a ludicrous whirl of bodies amidst a wild shriek of song and a cloud of smoke. In such manner the second team disbanded, at the end, spent with laughter and breathless from their exertions, giving three feeble groans for Kenwood and "nine long Parkinsons"!

Friday was a long and gloomy day. There was little use trying to do anything at recitations if you were on the team, and not much more if you weren't. You just bluffed, if you could, or threw yourself on the mercy of the instructors, trusting that they would prove human enough to be lenient. They usually were, for long experience had proved to the Parkinson faculty that for a week before the big game and for several days after it normal members of the student body were incapable of interest in studies. To make matters more dismal on Friday, it rained. It didn't rain in a cheerful, whole-souled way, but drizzled and stopped and sulked and drizzled again, and you wanted to be outdoors if you were in and wanted to be back again as soon as you were out. There was blackboard work for the players in the afternoon and signal drill in the evening. Afterwards Myron and Joe and Andrew chatted in Number 17 until bedtime, while from over in front of Parkinson Hall the cheers of some five hundred youths arose to the cloudy sky. Then came ten o'clock, and Andy went, and the room-mates got thoughtfully out of their clothes and crept beneath the covers, each a trifle more silent than usual. To Myron's surprise, sleep came after a very short time, and when he awoke the sun was bright in a crisp November world and there were roystering sounds from the bath-rooms down the corridor.

The first Kenwood invaders appeared well before noon, and every hour after that brought more until by two o'clock the streets of the town, already fairly impartially arrayed as to shop windows

with the blue and the brown, wore a decidedly cerulean hue. For the team, dinner was served at twelve instead of one, and after that there remained a long hour and a half before they could find relief from inaction. They were at liberty to do as they liked within reasonable limits, and Myron and Joe and Chas wandered across the campus and down School Street in search of diversion. Chas was, in his own language, "too old a bird to have nerves," and he didn't intend that either of the others should either. He was bubbling over with good spirits and kept Myron and Joe laughing from the time the three of them left the campus. Perhaps his cheerfulness was largely due to the fact that, at the eleventh hour, Coach Driscoll had chosen him over Brodhead for left guard. And perhaps the coach had never intended to do anything else. Chas never knew as to that. But he did know that had things turned out differently for him his plans for next season would have been of as much interest as a last year's bird's nest!

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Their progress through the unusually thronged streets was frequently interrupted while Chas greeted an acquaintance, generally one of the enemy. In front of the hotel quite a crowd had collected to peer through doors and windows at the Kenwood heroes, who, having eaten dinner, were herded in the lobby about coach and trainer and rubbers. The three pushed into the throng until they could glimpse their adversaries, and Chas pointed out several of the notables to the others: Leeds, captain and right tackle; the much-respected McAfee, left half-back; Odell, full-back and goal kicker extraordinary; Garrity, the Blue's clever quarter. "And the others I don't know the names of," said Chas, "although that whaling big, pop-eyed monster must be Todd, their centre. He's a new one this year. Wonder which of the bunch is Lampley, the chap I'm up against."

"And I wonder which is my man," said Joe. "I hope he's like his name!"

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"Frost, isn't it?" asked Chas. "They say he's good, but you'll know more about him along toward four-thirty."

"Who are the fellows over there by the desk?" asked Myron.

"The tall one's their coach, and I guess the others are the Board of Strategy, which is a fancy name for a bunch of fellows who travel around with the team and get their expenses paid out of the travelling fund. I think the short fellow is Whitely, their manager, but I'm not certain. Come on, we'll see enough of them before the afternoon's over!"

In the act of turning, Myron's gaze encountered a rather tall youth in the lobby whose face became for the first time visible to him at that moment. Surely it was Maurice Millard, he thought. And yet it couldn't be, since Millard would never be hob-nobbing with the Kenwood coach. Resisting Chas' tug at his sleeve, he gazed at the object of his speculations while a vague uneasiness took possession of him. It was Millard! He knew him now. It was Millard in a long fuzzy brown ulster and a derby hat, Millard looking far less carefree and cordial than he remembered him. Myron seized the departing Chas and literally dragged him back through the crowd.

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"Who's the tall, good-looking fellow in the brown coat?" he demanded anxiously.

"Where is he? I don't see any good, tall-looking fellow in—Oh, yes! That's What's-his-name, the Kenwood third baseman. He's a pill. He's played with them two years. Know him?"

"I think so," answered Myron, "a—a little. His name's Millard, isn't it?"

"Mill-ah? No, it isn't Mill-ah; it's Cooke, Arthur Cooke. Come along home and stop annoying the animals."

Myron looked again, but there was no chance for doubt. He turned and made his way through the group of loiterers in the wake of Chas and Joe. When he had overtaken the former he asked earnestly: "Are you quite certain his name is Cooke, Cummins?"

"Sure I am! Why not? He's the blow-hard that was going to do all sorts of things to Liddell last spring, if you believe the papers. He is a pretty fair batter, and that's no joke, but Liddell had him swinging like a gate and as mad as a hornet. He got a scratch single, and that's all he did get, the big boob!"

"And—and he's—he's one of the Kenwood Board of Strategy, as you call it?" asked Myron faintly.

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"Yes, sort of. He scouts for them, I guess. Anyway, I heard they caught him snooping around the grounds of Chancellor last year and mighty near tore his shirt off. Kenwood has a fine old spy system, Foster, but it never gets her anywhere except back home!"

Myron set the pace for the rest on the way back, his thoughts appearing to affect his feet. It was still only a little after a quarter past one and they were not due at the gymnasium until two. In that scant three-quarters of an hour, reflected Myron sickeningly, he must find Coach Driscoll and make his humiliating confession. Whether he had given Millard, or Cooke, enough information to affect the game, Myron didn't know, but he did know that the manly and honest thing to do was to tell the coach all about it and let him decide that question. That Mr. Driscoll would let him play on the team after his confession had been made was highly improbable, but there was no help for that. In front of Parkinson Hall he made some sort of confused excuse to the others and hurried away.

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CHAPTER XXVI

BEHIND THE STAND

"You mean to tell me," said Coach Driscoll incredulously, "that you talked about the team to a perfect stranger, Foster, to a fellow met on a station platform?"

"Not so much the first time, sir," answered Myron miserably. "It was when he came here. He didn't seem like a stranger then, and I thought he was what he said he was."

"You did, eh? Why, he has prep school written all over him! I simply can't understand it, Foster!" The coach looked helplessly to Jud Mellen and from Jud to Farnsworth and Chas and Katie. Myron had run Mr. Driscoll to earth at last in the gymnasium, in consultation with the trainer, and now they were in the little office of Mr. Tasser, the physical director. The others had been summoned from the locker room downstairs, being the only players then in the building. Having produced them, Billy Goode had discreetly closed the door behind them and retired to the entrance, where Myron could see him now through the glass partition, his purple and white sweater radiant in the sunlight that flooded through the doorway. Myron rather preferred looking at Billy to meeting the accusing gaze of the coach. He was not having a very happy time of it. [306]

"Cooke's crafty," offered Katie. "I guess he could easily make you believe he was a travelling salesman if he wanted to try, and you didn't know him."

Chas nodded, scowling, but the coach said impatiently: "What of it? Even if Foster thought he was that, he shouldn't have talked. A travelling man is the last person on earth to tell secrets to! Didn't it even occur to you, Foster, that the fellow might repeat what you said?"

"No, sir, it didn't. He seemed such a—a decent sort, Mr. Driscoll!"

"Let's get this right," said Jud impatiently. "Tell us again just what you told him, as near as you can remember."

Myron did so. His recollection of the two conversations was none too clear, however, and he faltered several times.

"And then he brought in the subject of signals?" prompted the coach. "Can you remember what you told him then?"

"I don't think I told him anything of—of consequence," answered Myron. "He said he thought that simple signals were best and told a lot of stories about games where the players had got the signals wrong because they were too complicated. And he told about some team a long while ago where they used to use words instead of numbers. I said our signals were simple enough, and he said he supposed we numbered the openings and the players from right to left; or maybe he said left to right. And I told him we didn't; that we began at the ends and numbered in; and then Eddie Moses stopped the cab quick and threw us off the seat." [307]

"Eddie appears to deserve a medal and resolutions of thanks," observed the coach drily. "You're quite certain that was all you told him, Foster? It was at the point you speak of that the jolt came?"

"Yes, sir. I think I had started to say something else, but I didn't have time."

There was a moment of thoughtful silence. Myron looked about the circle of troubled faces and wished himself at the bottom of the ocean. At last Chas spoke. "Well, say, folks, I don't see that there's been much harm done. Foster didn't tell that fox anything Kenwood didn't know already, I guess, except about the signals. They've seen us play all fall and know just about as much about our players and the way they play as we do." [308]

"That's so," murmured Farnsworth. "They had three scouts at the Chancellor game."

"What about the signals, though?" asked Mr. Driscoll, frowning. "How much could Cooke make of what Foster so kindly informed him?"

"Mighty little, I'd say," answered Katie. "There are just as many ways of numbering from the ends to the middle as there are from one end to the other, or from the middle out. Seems to me this Eddie boy put the brakes on at about the right minute!"

"Eddie ought to get a season ticket," said Chas.

"Well, the fat's in the fire and there's no use trying to pull it out now," said the coach resignedly. "If we find they're on to our signals we'll have to switch. I guess we'd better arrange a new code before the game, Cater."

"That's easy, Coach. Just change about and number from the centre out."

"Wouldn't do, Cater. The fellows would get balled up unless they had a good hour's drill first. We'll have to think up some simpler method."

"Double the odd numbers," suggested Chas. "Call 1, 11, 2, 22; and so on. They did that last year on the second and we couldn't get it at all till they told us after the season." [309]

"That might do," agreed the coach, and the rest nodded. "That would make outside left end 99," he reflected. "Sound all right to you, Cater?"

"Sure! That's easy enough, but what about 11, 13 and 15? Call them 111, 113 and 115?"

"I think so. We'll have to change the sequence call, though. We'll make it any even number over

"Your friend Cooke wouldn't approve, though, Foster," said Farnsworth. "He'd say they were too complicated."

Myron flushed, but made no answer.

"Get the team together as soon as you can, Cap," said the coach, "and let Cater go over the new signals with them a couple of times. Mind, though, we don't change unless it's evident that Kenwood is solving the plays. That's all, you fellows. Just a minute, Foster, please."

The rest hurried out and down the stairs. Myron leaned back again in the chair with a sigh. Mr. Driscoll viewed him coldly.

"I suppose you realise that you've made rather a mess of things," said the coach. Myron assented in silence. "The things you let out to this Kenwood spy may mean just the difference to us between winning and losing. I hope they won't, but they may. I don't believe in hitting a man when he's down, Foster, and so I won't say any more about it. I suppose you're feeling rather rotten yourself." The boy's glance was answer enough. "I was going to have you start the game at full." He paused and Myron's heart sank. "I've changed my mind. There may be a chance for you before the game's over, but don't count on it. If you should by any possibility get in, Foster, I shall expect you to try very hard to make up for any mischief you've caused with that tongue of yours. That's all. You'd better hustle down and go through those signals."

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When Myron had gone Mr. Driscoll frowned. "I wonder," he muttered, "if that was the right thing. Sort of tough on him, too. And if he should get sore—Well, we'll see." Lifting the telephone beside him, he called the locker room. "Hello! Who is this? Oh, Mistle? Well, ask Farnsworth to come up here a minute, please."

The manager appeared promptly and behind the closed glass door the two spoke briefly with heads close together. Then Farnsworth arose and sped out, an expression of unholy glee on his countenance, and the coach, tapping the ashes from his pipe, dropped it into his pocket and went downstairs.

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Across the campus a clock struck two.

The teams that faced each other that afternoon were fairly matched in weight and, as events proved, closely matched in skill. Neither the Brown nor the Blue found herself until the first fifteen-minute period was nearly over. Each seemed to lack confidence, and those who hoped to see one team or the other take the lead at the start were doomed to disappointment. There was much punting in that first quarter, some half-hearted rushing that soon slowed down, several fumbles and not a little bad judgment. Each team appeared more intent on watching her opponent than on playing the game, and it was not until the very end that Parkinson awoke from her lethargy and got into her stride.

A fortunate forward-pass started her up, and from her own forty-two yards to the enemy's thirty-four she took the ball on line attacks varied by one wide, swinging run by Meldrum. But the Blue was also awake now and her line steadied and Parkinson was forced to punt. Kenwood plunged twice and returned the punt and Cater caught and was downed in his tracks. Kearns made a scant yard at guard on the right of the line and time was called.

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Starting again from near Parkinson's forty-yard line, the ball went across the centre and back again. Cater was nailed when he attempted a quarter-back run to the left and Brown made four yards in two tries. Keith fell back and punted out of bounds at the twenty-five. No advantage accrued to either team for the next five minutes. Parkinson was set back for holding and Kenwood was twice penalised for off-side. The spectators' hearts went into their throats when a Kenwood back misjudged a punt, and it looked for an instant as if the Brown was to score. But Norris missed the ball and the Kenwood quarter fell on it eight yards from the goal-line. The Blue promptly punted out of danger. Parkinson failed to gain at the Blue line and made a forward which grounded. She then punted to the enemy's thirty yards. The half ended with the pigskin in Parkinson territory near the middle of the field and in Kenwood's possession.

Neither team had shown ability to gain consistently at her opponent's line. Parkinson had made two first downs and Kenwood one. At punting Kenwood had outdistanced the Brown by some five yards on each kick, but had not gained any advantage by it, since Stearns and Norris were playing the game of their lives. In short, it was still anybody's game. During half-time the rivals contended with cheers and songs, the contest going to Parkinson by reason of a slight advantage in numbers and the possession of a brass band. It was about the middle of that fifteen-minute intermission that a small youth in the attire of a messenger boy came wandering along the edge of the Kenwood stand. "Mr. Cooke!" he droned. "Message for Mr. Cooke!"

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In response a youth in a fuzzy brown overcoat arose from the group on the nearly deserted players' bench. "All right, kid!" he called. "Here I am! Let's have it!"

"You Mr. Cooke?" asked the boy suspiciously.

"Yes, A. M. Cooke. Is it for me?"

"Yeah, that's right: A. M. Cooke. Well, you're wanted at the telephone."

"Where is it?" asked Cooke, vaulting the rope into the passage. The boy waved a thumb over

his shoulder.

"Out there," he said vaguely. "I'll show you."

Cooke followed, winding his way through the crowd about the entrance. At the gate he spoke to one of the ticket takers. "Let me have a check, will you?" he asked. "I'm coming back."

The boy presiding at the box smiled mysteriously. "That'll be all right," he said. "You won't need any check." [314]

Afterwards, Cooke concluded that it was at that moment that suspicion began to creep in. But the messenger led on and he followed around the back of the stand and into the presence of four grim-looking and extremely athletic first class fellows. Cooke saw no telephone, and a frown gathered on his classic brow. The messenger was speaking. "Here he is," he said. "I got him. Where's me half?"

A coin changed hands. Cooke looked on curiously, a question trembling on his lips. But he didn't need to ask that question. Suddenly the four youths encompassed him closely and he felt no further interest in telephones.

"Is your name Cooke?" asked the spokesman.

Cooke wanted very much to deny it, but knew that denial would be futile. So he said yes, and the other went on as follows:

"Well, Cooke, we don't like your sort. There's a train that will take you to Kenwood leaving our station in fifteen minutes. If I were you I'd try mighty hard to get it. It won't be healthy for you around here after it's gone."

Cooke moistened his lips. "Why should I?" he demanded in a weak attempt at bluster. "I paid to see this game——" [315]

"That's all right. You'll get your money back. We've bought your train ticket, and there's eighteen cents change coming to you. You can walk to the station comfortably in twelve minutes." The speaker looked at his watch. "You've just got twelve if you start now. These chaps are going with you to show the way and see that you don't change your mind."

Cooke looked at the faces surrounding him, bit his lip, laughed weakly and shrugged. "I suppose you think you're frightfully clever," he said, "but you're not worrying me any. I don't care to see the game, anyhow. We'll beat you, so what's it matter?"

"Eleven minutes," was the reply. "You'll have to run if you don't start quick."

"Suppose I don't choose to go?" asked Cooke defiantly.

"Why, that would be very unhealthy for you," answered the other, a smile threatening his gravity. Cooke looked up at the stand. There were plenty of friends there, but there seemed to be no way of reaching them. At the top a few occupants of the last row were looking down curiously, but they appeared quite unsuspecting of the indignity being visited on their schoolmate. Cooke yielded. [316]

"All right," he muttered.

"And, one thing more, Cooke," said the spokesman of the little committee, "it will be better if you don't come over here with the baseball team next spring. In fact, if I were you, I'd take good care to stay away from here. We don't like spies."

CHAPTER XXVII

FULL-BACK FOSTER

"That's all, I guess," said Coach Driscoll in conclusion. "The main thing is to play hard, fellows, and play fast. I don't think we'll have to change our signals. If Kenwood was on to them she'd have showed it before this. So tear in now and show what you can really do. No more sleeping on the job, no more watchful waiting. Here's your line-up. Stearns, Mellen, Cummins, Cantrell, Dobbins, Keith, Mistle, Cater, Meldrum, Brown, Foster. On the run now!"

Myron, startled, gazed incredulously at the coach across the room. The others were heaving toward the doors, and he jumped up and followed, overtaking the coach in the corridor at the foot of the short stairway.

"I—you said—me, Mr. Driscoll?" stammered Myron.

"Yes," answered the coach calmly. "You're in, Foster."

"Oh!" He darted forward, stopped and sprang back again. "Thank you, sir," he said gratefully.

"All right, my boy." Mr. Driscoll smiled. "You know what to do!" [318]

Know what to do? Well, he rather thought he did, he told himself as he trotted across the little space of turf to the rope. His lips were very tight together and it wasn't until Joe smote him resoundingly between the shoulders that he knew he had been spoken to.

"Good stuff, kiddo!" Joe was repeating. "Glad you're back. Go to it and eat 'em up, Brother!"

The cheering was deafening. Across the trampled field the Kenwood players were already throwing aside their blankets. Near at hand the Warne Silver Cornet Band was blaring loudly, although all he got of it was the insistent *thump, thump, thump!* of the big drum. Then they were clustered on the side-line for a last earnest word from Jud Mellen and a minute later, spread over the east end of the gridiron, they awaited the whistle.

Myron played through the first few minutes in a queer sort of daze. He got his signals, fell into place and went through the plays, but it was much as though some one else was doing it and he was only looking on. What brought him to, in a manner of speaking, was a fine clout on his head when, Kenwood having taken the ball on downs by a few inches, the play piled through between Joe and Paul Keith and Myron found himself a part of the squirming heap two yards behind his line. The blow from some one's shoe cleared his brain very effectively and the some one who played and the some one who looked on became instantly merged. Which, perhaps, was a lucky thing, since a minute later, after Kenwood's quarter had fumbled and Mistley had squirmed through on top of the ball, he was called on to punt.

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For an instant his nerves jangled badly while he awaited the ball with outstretched hands, but when he had it between his gripping fingers he forgot. A quick turn, a step forward, a swing of his long leg and a fine, full thud of leather against leather! Off sailed the ball, well over the up-flung hands of the enemy, straight toward the corner of the field. He side-stepped a charging Kenwood forward, went down under the kick and found his place again near the Blue's twelve yards. Back up the gridiron presently, Kenwood kicking on the second down. Then a fake and a run to the right by Meldrum for a scant yard, a short gain past tackle on the left by Brown, and finally another punt, not so long this time. And so it went, neither side gaining her distance, both reverting to punts in the end.

Time was taken out for Cantrell, again for Katie, again for a Kenwood end, and the game was slowing up. Two penalties were awarded, and the opponents shared them. It was near the end of the third quarter now. Brounker took Meldrum's place and Kenwood changed her left guard. Myron was dirty and bruised and panting, but so they all were. Chas had a long cut down one cheek that made him look like a desperado, but he was grinning broadly every minute. Jud Mellen was everywhere, encouraging, pleading, scolding, his voice sounding like the rasp of a file.

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Brounker got clean away and was forced out at his own forty-six yards after a twelve-yard gain. The Brown flags waved and a great cheer crashed across the field. Myron charged straight at the centre, found a hole awaiting him and sped through, Joe's voice growling above the rasp of canvas and the laboured breaths of tired lungs. "*Atta boy, kiddo! Atta boy!*" Back came the ball: Mistley had been off-side. Katie called Stearns around and slammed the ball at him as he sped past, but Kenwood had guessed the play and Stearns made less than a yard. Then Myron had the ball overhead and was watching Stearns running back, far over on the left. A long heave and a good one, but a Kenwood half spoiled it and it was fourth down. Myron punted. A whistle blew.

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The mouthful of water no more than dampened Myron's dry throat.

"Once I saw a whole pond full of this stuff," panted Chas as he took the dipper from Myron.

"Shut up!" begged the other. "There ain't no such thing!"

Jud dragged Chas aside and Joe joined Myron as they walked over to where the umpire awaited them above the ball. "How's it going?" asked Joe. "Some game, kiddo, believe me!"

"Can't we score, Joe?" asked Myron, scowling.

"Sure we can! We're going to! That centre of their line's just ready to cave, kiddo. It's all-in from tackle to tackle. The new guy they put in for Lampley's a cinch. Keep at 'em, Brother! You're going fine!"

And yet the last quarter was many minutes old before Myron found any indication that Joe's prophecy was to come true. Then, very suddenly, Brown romped through the Blue's centre and fought for eleven yards before he was brought down. That was the first decisive gain through the Kenwood line, and the Parkinson adherents shouted frantically. But another attack at the same place was stopped for less than two yards, and a third netted nothing. A skin-tackle play, Brounker carrying, gave the Brown five yards more. Faking a punt, Myron sped to the left, cut in and got the distance. Again came the Parkinson cheers.

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"We've got them going, Parkinson!" cried Katie. "They can't stop us now! Make this good, fellows! Play hard!"

"Hard! Hard!" croaked Jud, smiting the crouching men. "Into it! Get into it, Parkinson!"

But there was a long road to travel and time was speeding, and although three times the Brown made her distance by narrow margins, on the twenty-three yards, with the Blue's goal beckoning, Kenwood rallied and held through three downs. Then, while the shouting stands became silent, Paul Keith fell back and judged the distance to the cross-bar. Kenwood swayed and gasped, her quarter shrilly calling on his men to "*Block this kick! Block it! Block it!*" Back sped the ball, was dropped—

A groan arose from the Brown stand. Far to the right of the goal travelled the ball. The blue-stockinged warriors danced and shouted in glee. Keith's head dropped despondently as he turned back up the field. "Seven minutes to play," called the field judge. Then they were battling again.

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Perhaps that lost score had its effect, for Kenwood was soon in Parkinson territory. As far as the thirty yards she went before she was stopped. Her punt went over the line and the ball came out to the twenty-five. Two attacks at the Kenwood centre brought the distance. Kenwood had

new material in her line now. Brown tried an end and got three. But he was hurt and Vance took his place. Vance was stopped for a slight loss when he tried left tackle. Myron gained four through left guard and Brounker followed with three more. The tape left the ball in Parkinson's possession. Another forward, Myron to Stearns, failed. The ball was in mid-field now and there were but three minutes left. The stands were already emptying slowly. Coach Driscoll began sending in substitutes, fellows who had worked hard and deserved their letters. Joe was gone, Cummins, Cater, even Keith, who alone might score a field-goal should Fortune give the opportunity. Warren had taken Cater's place. Warren was fresh and eager and undismayed. His signals came snappily, and he pushed the wearied veterans hard.

"Make it go!" he chanted. "Make it go! Don't give up the ball! There's time enough left to score. Here's where we get away from them. Come on, Parkinson! Show your grit!"

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Brounker and Vance gained. The Kenwood line was weakening fast now, but Myron feared that it was too late. Vance again, past left tackle on a criss-cross. Then Myron, sliding off left guard for the needed distance. Well past the fifty-yard line now, and still going, but with seconds remaining instead of minutes and the time-keeper's eyes glued to the dial of his watch. If only they could get past those Kenwood backs, thought Myron! The Blue line was pasteboard now, but the backs still fought hard and held firm. Somewhere near the enemy's thirty yards Warren called a sequence and Myron's heart leaped. If they played quickly, smoothly, they *must* get through! Brounker tried left of centre and piled through, but was nailed by Kenwood's backs. Four yards! Then, without signals, the team snapped into the next play. A quick shift to the right, Brounker sprang away to the left, the ball sped back straight from centre and Myron caught it. Kenwood sensed danger now and shifted back to meet it, but Myron was already charging past the left of the line, the interference working like a charm. He was through before he realised it and only a surprised quarter-back stood between him and the goal!

Ahead and at his right sped Vance, tuckered but still game. Behind him weary feet pounded. In his ears was a mighty noise that he knew for the wild, imploring shrieks of friend and foe. Through it came the dull *thump, thump!* of the bass drum. Twenty yards more now, and the quarter, white-faced and desperate, running toward him with clutching fingers. Then Vance was down, run out, and Myron was alone. Fifteen yards and the Kenwood quarter-back poising for his tackle! Myron gave a little toward the side-line, slackened his pace and then, with a final demand on his strength, sprang forward again at renewed speed. The quarter-back leaped. Myron felt his arms at his hips as he spun on his heel. One arm fell away, but a hand closed inside his leg above the knee and a great weight pulled at him. One plunge, a second, and the last line was swimming in his sight. Then, as if by a miracle, the clutching hand was gone, and, freed of the dragging burden, Myron stumbled, fell to his knees, recovered and went on, [straight across the last white line to victory!](#)

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[Straight across the last white line to victory](#)

Parkinson did not add a goal to her touchdown. She did not even try, for the crowd that

overspread the field refused to be dispersed, and, since the last second of play had ticked itself off just before Myron had reached the line, no one insisted very hard. Parkinson was satisfied with that lone 6; and if Kenwood was not, why, that was of small moment! Blue banners waved, the band led, the victors followed, caps floated across the goal bars, the big drum said *Thump! Thump! Thump!* and pandemonium reigned supreme over Parkinson Field.

Some four hours later, Andrew Merriman, crossing the campus on his way to Sohmer, almost collided with a small and visibly excited youth who, panting an apology, added: "They've elected the new captain! I got it from a waiter!"

"Have they, son? Well, who is he?"

"Bet you couldn't guess! I've told three fellows already and not one of them guessed right!"

"Then there's no use in my trying," replied Andrew amiably. "Suppose you tell me."

"It's—*Cummins!*"

"*No!*"

"Yes, it is! What do you think of that? Why, no one expected *he'd* get it!"

"No one," chuckled Andrew as the youngster disappeared into the gloom. "Anyway, no one but Cummins!"

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